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An Introduction to Manicheism

Early Iranian Civilizations 103 = DivSchool 3580, 2006 Fall term



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<http://www.etf.cuni.cz/mirrors/ccel/ccel/fathers2/>

HISTORY OF MANICHEAN STUDIES IN THE WEST

In the second half of the **16th century** after the religious reformation initiated by Martin Luther, whose the 95 theses were posted on the church entrance in Wittenberg 10/31/1517, defenders of the Catholic church reached back to the arch heresy of all times in their efforts to discredit the new heresy, explaining many of the new aberrations of Luther as a resurgence of those of Mani.

These attacks did not remain unanswered. In **1578** the first historical study of Manicheism saw the light of day. Its author, Cyriacus Spangenberg, strongly rebutted the accusations leveled against Luther that he was propagating the errors of Mani. Using the writings of St. Augustine he endeavored to show that, rather than following in the tracks of Mani, Luther and the Protestants were the last defenders of the Church against such heresies, and, in fact, Luther's doctrine had nothing in common with that of Mani, the author said.



The controversy continued for some time and is of interest because it led to the collection and publication of the widely scattered notices on Mani and Manicheism in the various early Latin and Greek writings. This work was pursued throughout the 17th and well into the 18th century. The principal sources for Manicheism available at the beginning of the 17th century were three: Augustine (a Manichean 373-82), Pope Leo I (440-61), and an anti-Manichean treatise by a former North-African Manichean from the 4th century, Fabius Marius Victorinus.

The works of the rest of the church fathers were still awaiting editing. Augustine, who had been a Manichean, described their customs and teachings from first-hand experience, although he had not graduated to the highest ranks and was therefore ignorant of some of the "mysteries." Among the writings Augustine and others cited from was the so-called *Epistula fundamenti*, a book composed and used by the North-African Manicheans.¹

Then, in **1668**, an ancient document concerning Manicheism was discovered by Henri de Valois in a manuscript in the Ambrosian library in Milan. This was a fragment of the *Acta Archelai* of Hegemonius, the existence of which was known because it had been quoted by several church fathers from the 4th century: Cyril of Jerusalem (fl. 348), St. Epiphanius (b. 313), and St. Jerome (345-419). The *Acta Archelai* purported to be the acts of a discussion between Bishop Archelaus of Kaskhar (al-Wâsit) and Mani himself that took place in 277 at Kaskhar and Diodorida? in Mesopotamia. If genuine, the *Acta* would therefore be an extraordinary document indeed. According to the *Acta*, Archelaus worsted Mani both times and charged Hegemonius to edit the minutes of the two sessions. The original was thought to have been in Syriac, from which Greek and Latin translations were made. After this, a search was made for the complete text of the *Acta*, several manuscripts were found, and a critical edition by L. A. Zacagni, prefect of the Vatican library, was published in 1698.

The first known work written expressly to refute Manichean doctrines is that of Alexander of Lycopolis (ca. 300) in Egypt, a follower of Mani who became a Christian. In this work, which dates from not long after the *Acta*, he refutes Mani in 26 chapters. The work was published by François Combéfis in 1672.

Several other original works as well as studies were published over the next years. Among these was the *Against the Manicheans* by Titus of Bostra in Arabia (d. 371), who had himself read one of Mani's books: *the Book*

¹ The fragments were collected and edited by E. Feldmann in 1987.

of *Mysteries*.

Another group of sources is the relatively large number of abjuration formulas found scattered throughout a variety of manuscripts. The oldest known is one quoted by St. Augustine, a list of ten anathemata against Mani.

Among the various texts that were discovered and published in this period, note one written by a certain Timothy of Constantinople (6th cent.), in which two Manichean books are mentioned, the *Kephalaia* and the *euchology* (book of prayers and liturgies) of the sect.

By the mid-17th century, what had started out as polemics in the wake of the reformation, had become a scholarly pursuit and desire to know more about the personality of Mani and his doctrine. Since Mani had come from the Orient, the scholars now began to look to the Orient for source material. The first of these sources were published in 1651.²

Then, in 1700, Thomas Hyde published his *Veterum Persarum et Parthorum et Medorum religionis historia*, the first comprehensive study of Iranian religion. In it he makes the observation that Mani was above all the enemy of the Persian religion.

From the beginning of the 18th century we also have the publication of a series of Syriac works containing references to Manicheism, among these the works of St. Ephrem the Syrian.

On the whole, however, the Oriental sources were not edited until the 19th century.

Beausobre and his successors

The first really important comprehensive study of Manicheism and its sources was published in 1734-39: Isaac de Beausobre's *Histoire critique de Manichée et du manichéisme*. The most important conclusion he reached in his critical assessment of the sources was that the *Acta* could not possibly be original; it was probably composed, not just written down, by Hegemonius in 340, that is, over sixty years after the event it records. As all the Greek church fathers used the *Acta* as their primary source on Mani and Manicheism, this entire tradition could not be considered original, and one therefore had to concentrate on the Oriental sources. At this time, however, these were not substantial enough to provide a complete, or even approximately complete, picture of Mani and his religion. Nevertheless, the picture drawn by Beausobre³ corresponds very closely to what we have learned since.

The various writers who reacted to Beausobre's work did not add much of great significance, and Manichean studies advanced but little until l'Abbé Foucher,⁴ in an appendix published in Kleuker's German translation (1776) of Anquetil-Duperron's translation of the Zoroastrian scriptures (1771), produced a study in which he compared Manicheism with Christianity and the Magian religion. His conclusions,⁵ based upon the Arab and Persian writers, were even closer to the truth than those of Beausobre.

In the second quarter of the 19th century several studies appeared, in which the authors endeavored to explain the diverse elements of Mani's teaching by assuming that he had originally belonged to the religion of the Magians and used their doctrine as the basis for his own, but with added, and adapted, elements from Christianity. As we now know, exactly the opposite took place, but this early view has persisted and is still widely held today. More importantly, the wider study of Oriental religions permitted scholars to see the spread of Manicheism throughout Asia and, although mistakenly, its influence upon the religions of Tibet and India.

Baur

Finally, in 1831, there appeared the first work in which Manicheism was being studied, not as a heresy or a bastardized Magian religion, but as a *new* religion in its own right. This was F. C. Baur's small book *Das manichäische Religionssystem, nach den Quellen neu untersucht und entwickelt* (Goettingen; The Manichean religious system, reexamined and reexplained on the basis of the sources). Different from the works of his predecessors, Baur concentrated on the **Western** sources, which, he pointed out, were contemporary with the early Manichean communities. Analyzing the doctrine, Baur concluded that, although its terminology was clearly

² J. H. Hottinger, *Historia Orientalis* and a work on Bar Hebraeus by E. Pococke.

³ Ries, pp. 38-39.

⁴ "a prolific scholar who published in the *Mémoires de l'Académie* a great number of papers" (J. Duchesne-Guillemin, *The Western Response to Zoroaster*, Oxford, 1958, p. 13).

⁵ Ries, p. 47.

Christian, its contents originated from **Indian** religion, more specifically the religion of the Jainas.

Arabic sources

Then, just before the middle of the 19th century, editions of the Arabic authors began to appear: in 1842 W. Cureton published his edition of Muhammad al-Shahrastani's (b. 1086) *Kitâb al-milal wa'l-nihal* ("The book of religious sects and philosophical schools"), and in 1862 G. Flügel published a monograph containing an edition of the section on Manicheism contained in Ibn al-Nadim's *Fihrist al-'ulûm* (compl. 987; "Catalogue of sciences"). From his study of the Arabic sources, Flügel concluded that Manicheism was an Asian religion based on Zoroastrianism, the Sabeism of the Mughtasila (a Baptist sect), and a biblical strain based on Christian teachings.

Finally, in 1878, E. Sachau published the *Chronology* of Abu Rayhân al-Biruni (973-1048; *Āthār al-bāqiya 'an qurûn al-khāliya*). Later he also published Biruni's book on *India* (*Kitâb fî taḥqīq ma li'l-Hind*). Biruni, too, claims to have his information from the *Book of Mysteries*, which he says he unearthed, after a long search, in the library of Choresmia.

On the basis of this new material the Iranist Fr. Spiegel concluded that Mani had started out with the Iranian concept of dualism, but had then assimilated elements from Christianity and Buddhism, but most of all the old Babylonian cosmology.

This approach to Manicheism was then pursued to its fullest extent by Konrad Kessler, whose *Mani*, vol. 1, appeared in 1889. Kessler concluded that Mani continued the old Babylonian and Chaldean religions (where, according to the common opinion of those days Zoroaster also obtained his ideas!). He retained some of the Iranian religious structures, added some Buddhist moral teachings that he found on his journey to India, and finally clothed the whole in Christian terminological garb for the benefit of the Mesopotamian Christian community.

After this, the debate continued for a while, swaying back and forth, but producing no lasting results. More importantly, progress was being made in the study of the *Acta* and the editing of Syriac sources. After important new manuscript finds it was finally determined that the original *Acta* had been written in Greek by Hegemonius and that the Latin version had been made later, between 392 and 450, at a time when the Catholic church of Africa was confronting the Manichean community there. A complete edition of the *Acta* by C. H. Beeson appeared in 1905 (Leipzig). A new translation by M. Vermes appeared in 2001.

The provenance and attribution of several other Greek texts were determined around this time as well, notably the so-called abjuration formulas.

Syriac sources

Two important Syriac sources were edited at this time, also after important new manuscript finds: the anti-Manichean writings of St. Ephrem were discovered and eventually published by C. W. Mitchell in 1912. His remarks on Mani and Manicheism were collected and edited by E. Beck in 1978.

Extracts from the *Book of scholies* by **Theodore bar Konai** (6th cent.) were published by H. Pognon in 1898, and the complete extant text by A. Scher in 1910. Before then, the Manichean cosmogony according to Theodore had been studied by F. Cumont (1908).

THE 20TH CENTURY 1. CENTRAL ASIA

From the beginning of the 20th century the situation of Manichean studies was totally changed. Through a series of discoveries of comprehensive original texts scholars were able to recover a much more complete and accurate picture both of the early beginnings of the religion and its later developments. The new texts also supplied a much needed control for the western and eastern sources known until then, so that the information they contained could be used with much greater confidence.

The first of the several discoveries that were to send western explorers and scholars into frenzies of activity was that of a birch-bark manuscript found by the British cavalry officer Hamilton Bower. This turned out to be one of the very earliest preserved books in the whole world, dating from the 5th century C.E. The manuscript contained a medical text, which was edited by the great indologist Rudolf Hoernle and published in 1893.

Several famous explorers followed in Bower's footsteps, but as they are of greater importance for Buddhist than Manichean studies I will mention them briefly: the Swede Sven Hedin traveled through Xinjiang for the first time in 1893-97. The English orientalist and linguist **Mark Aurel Stein** traveled to Khotan for the first time in 1890, excavated at Niya in 1901, and returned to England with his treasures in the same year. In 1902 the Japanese count Otani traveled to Kashgar and Tashkurgan. In 1906 the French orientalist and sinologist **Paul Pelliot** led an expedition through **Turfan** to **Dunhuang**, where he was able to acquire enormous quantities of manuscripts in different languages. At the same time Aurel Stein had returned to Xinjiang, traveling through Khotan onward to Dunhuang, where he too acquired numerous manuscripts. The Russians, as well, had been very active from about 1905. In 1910 an expedition led by the Indologist Sergei Oldenburg returned to St. Petersburg laden with treasures. In 1913-14 Aurel Stein conducted his third and longest expedition.

Turfan

Also in 1902, the German **Albert Grünwedel** from the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin traveled to Turfan, where they discovered numerous manuscripts, among them a large number of Manichean ones. A second expedition (1904-05) was financed by the steel magnate Krupp, as well as the emperor himself (Wilhelm II), and led by **Albert von Le Coq**. In the third expedition (1905-07) Grünwedel joined Le Coq at Kashgar and took them through Kucha, Karashahr, Turfan, and Hami. The fourth expedition (1913-14) was also led by Le Coq. All four expeditions were enormously successful.

Publication of the new material began immediately. In 1904 the German **F. W. K. Müller** published two articles containing manuscript remains from Turfan, Chinese Turkestan. In the second article he published a short text in "dialect," that is, Sogdian, on the creation of the heavens, which he compared with a parallel passage from the *Fihrist* text published by Flügel. Müller's understanding of this text at such an early stage is astonishing.



Le Coq, Grünwedel, Bartus, Pohrt.
www.bbaw.de/bbaw/Forschung/Forschungsprojekte/turfanforschung/de/Turfanforschung#2



F. W. K. Müller

In 1904 **Carl Salemann** started publishing a series of Manichean texts in Hebrew alphabet and with glossaries from the St. Petersburg collection, in all, four articles (*Manichaeica* I-IV, 1907-12), and at the same time he republished Müller's texts, but in the Hebrew alphabet and with a complete glossary.

The first Manichean Turkish text was published by Le Coq in 1908. We may note as a curiosity that the text contains a fragment of the Zarathustra legend as it was known in the 3rd century to Mani and the other Manichean authors. In 1910 he published an important confession text, the *Khwâstwânift*, and from 1911 on a series of articles containing Turkish Manichean texts from Turfan.

A **Chinese Manichean** text was published by E. Chavannes and P. Pelliot in 1911, the famous *Traité manichéen*.

Two important studies of Chinese Manicheism by Paul Pelliot appeared in 1923 on the Manichean traditions in Fujian and 1925 on two Manichean manuscripts from Dunhuang.

Also in 1923 the first of a series of studies by the American Iranist **A. V. William Jackson** appeared. Most of these were collected and reprinted in his *Researches on Manicheism* from 1932.

Synthetic studies of Manicheism based on the new finds began appearing. J. Scheftelowitz's book on the origin of Manicheism and the mystery of salvation appeared, followed by an article in 1924 discussing the possible Iranian origin of Manicheism, and a series of other articles.

In 1924-25 H. H. Schaeder gave a series of lectures on the original form and development of Manicheism (published 1927), and in 1926 a study by O. G. von Wesendonk on the origin of Manicheism was published.

In 1926 the first studies of Chinese Manichean texts compared with other new and old texts were published by Ernst Waldschmitt and Wolfgang Lentz, who also published a study on Jesus in Manicheism and a number of Chinese and Iranian texts on Manichean doctrine.

The publication of the Iranian texts from Turfan was delayed by the war and the personality of the scholar to whom they had been entrusted, F. C. Andreas. Incapable of finishing a work and publishing it, it was not till after his death that the texts he had worked on were published by his student **W. B. Henning** in three articles (*Mitteliranische Manichaica* i-iii, 1932-34).

At the same time Henning began publishing articles containing texts and studies that were of paramount importance, for instance, on a Manichean cosmogonical hymn (1932), the birth and mission of the First Man (1933), a Manichean Enoch book (1934), a Manichean prayer and confession book (1936, contained important Sogdian texts). His study of the Middle Persian verb and his remarks on the new sources for the study of Manicheism (both 1933) and on central Asian Manicheism (1934) were fundamental.

The first comprehensive Forschungsbericht of Manicheism appeared in 1935: H. S. Nyberg's *Researches in Manicheism*. In the same year H. J. Polotsky's article on Manicheism for Paulys *Real-Enzyklopädie* appeared.

Publications of Central Asian texts after the war

During and after the war publication of the Iranian texts proceeded slowly at first. As a matter of fact, publication was fairly monopolized by Henning and his student **Mary Boyce**. Among the most important articles by Henning containing text publications are his "Mani's Last Journey," "The Book of Giants," "The Murder of the Magi," "The Manichean Fasts," "Sogdian Tales," "Two Manichean Magical Texts," and "A Sogdian Fragment of the Manichaean Cosmogony." In addition he quoted unpublished texts in most of his articles. Mary Boyce published important texts in two articles, "Sadwēs and Pēsūs" and "Some Parthian Abecedarian Hymns," and then, in 1954, her outstanding *The Manichean Hymn Cycles in Parthian*. In the same year appeared I. Gershevitch's *A Grammar of Manichean Sogdian*, in which unpublished Manichean Sogdian texts were extensively quoted. Six years later there appeared M. Boyce's invaluable *Catalogue* (1960). A promised edition of *Mir. Man.* iv by Henning-Boyce never has materialized, but the material collected for this book is now being published by others. In 1970 de Menasce made known a couple of Manichean fragments in the Pelliot collection in Paris, which turned out to belong together with other fragments from Berlin. In 1975 Boyce published a large number of the then known Manichean Persian and Parthian texts in transliteration in her *Reader* accompanied by a glossary.

By then the East-German scholar **Werner Sundermann** had started work on the East Berlin collection of Manichean manuscripts. After a couple of articles containing editions of Manichean texts based on the Christian gospels and others he published his first major and exemplary edition of Manichean texts arranged by subject. The first contained all the Persian and Parthian cosmological texts and all the parable texts (1973), the second all the

Persian, Parthian, and Sogdian texts relating to the history of the Manichean church (1981), the third contained a Sogdian parable book (1985). In between he has published numerous smaller fragments of considerable interest, as have his students Ch. Reck and I. Colditz.

A new edition of the eschatological part of the *Shabuhragân* by D. N. MacKenzie appeared in two issues of the *BSOAS* in 1979-80.

In 1980 a new collection of Sogdian texts was published by A. N. Ragoza, which also contained Manichean texts. One of these was reedited by N. Sims-Williams, a text from the cycle of Ohrmezd the Brave (1990).

German translations of all the hymnic texts in Iranian and Turkish by **H.-J. Klimkeit** was published in 1989, and a revised English translation appeared in (1993).

A facsimile and partial edition of the *Manichean hymn cycles* by Sundermann was published in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum* in 1990; a collection of later texts in 2000.

A new edition of the cosmological texts from the *Shabuhragân* with facsimiles by M. Hutter appeared in 1992.

A facsimile edition of all the Iranian Manichean texts published between 1904 and 1934 was published in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum* in 1996.

In two recent publications Sundermann has edited the fragments of two Central Asian Manichean texts: the *Sermon on the Light Nous* (1992) and the *Sermon on the Soul* (1997).

The famous Manichean polemical hymns in M 28 were published by Skjærvø in 1997.

A collection of **Manichean Turkish** texts was published by P. Zieme (1975), and further Turkish texts by Geng Shimin and H.-J. Klimkeit, one on the destruction of Manichean monasteries (1985) and another text from the cycle of Ohrmezd the Brave (1987).

A new edition of all the **Chinese Manichean** texts by H. Schmidt-Glinzer was published in 1987.

Studies on Manicheism

Numerous studies and books on Manicheism have seen the light of day since the war, and the pace is accelerating. Among the most important ones we much mention **H.-C. Puech's** *Le manichéisme, son fondateur, sa doctrine* (Paris, 1949), O. Klíma's *Manis Zeit und Leben* (Prague, 1963), G. Widengren's *Mani and Manichaeism* (New York etc., 1965), J. P. Asmussen's *X^uästvāntft. Studies in Manichaeism* (Copenhagen, 1965) and "Manichæism" (in *Historia Religionum* I, Leiden, 1969), and finally **S. N. C. Lieu's** three important studies, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China. A Historical Survey*, Manchester, 1985; *Manichaeism in Mesopotamia and the Roman East*, Leiden, 1994; and *Manichaeism in Central Asia and China*, Leiden, etc., 1998.

Of special importance for the use of Manichean texts as historical sources is Sundermann's study of the historiography of the Manicheans (1986-87).

Recent studies and collections include J. D. BeDuhn, *The Manichaean Body in Discipline and Ritual* (Baltimore and London, 2000), P. Mirecki and J. D. BeDuhn, eds., *Emerging from Darkness. Studies in the Recovery of Manichaean Sources* (Leiden, 1997) and *The Light and the Darkness. Studies in Manichaeism and its World* (Leiden, 2001).

THE 20TH CENTURY 2. EGYPT AND QUMRAN

The Coptic Manichean scriptures⁶

The first half of this century had more surprises in store, however. In 1930 Professor **Carl Schmidt**, during one of his travels to Egypt, discovered a batch of Coptic papyri in an antique shop in Cairo, which turned out to be from a Manichean library. The running head of the papyri contained the word *@nKephalaion*, which Schmidt immediately connected with Epiphanius's remark in the *Panarion* (374-377) that the name of one of the books of the Manicheans was *Kephalaia*. He therefore concluded that the whole batch must contain Manichean writings.

Meanwhile the British collector of Oriental antiquities, **Chester Beatty**, had also come across the Coptic papyri, and bought a considerable part of them. The rest Schmidt acquired for the State Museum in Berlin. In 1931-32 he made another trip to Egypt and found further parts of the same collection, which he bought. A couple of papyri had also been bought for the Vienna papyrus collection. This time he was also able to ascertain the place where the finds had been made. It was the basement of a house in Medinat Mâdi in Fayyum, a military colony from Ptolemean time.

An extensive report on the finds was published by Schmidt in 1933, in which he described the circumstances surrounding the acquisition of the papyri, as well as the contents of the two collections.

The Berlin collection contained at least five separate works: 1) *Kephalaia*, 2) Collection of *letters* from Mani to his disciples (Sisinnios and Koustaïos), 3) a *historical work* containing an account of Mani's death, as well as events after this, involving Queen Thadmor of Palmyra, King Amaró of Hira (great patron), and the Persian king Narseh, 4) a collection of *chronicles* by Mani's disciples, 5) a *synaxeis* of the *Living gospel*.

The London collection contained 1) *Hymns*, 2) *Homilies*, 3) another part of the *synaxeis* of the *Living gospel*, 4) a book that Schmidt could not yet identify, but which has now been shown to be a revised *Kephalaia* text.

Of the texts in the Berlin collection only a part (little more than half) of the *Kephalaia* was published in 1940 before the war broke out. Fortunately the collection was removed from the museum in which it was kept and placed in a bunker. As a matter of fact, the museum building was completely blasted in 1945 during an air raid. Parts of the collection were also kept by H. Ibscher, the conservator, in his own home. The result was that by the end of the war the collection had been widely scattered both throughout Germany and elsewhere: London, Warsaw, and Leningrad, and it is only very slowly coming back to light and being re-identified. It is a miracle that most of it actually seems to have survived. Among the as yet untraced papyri are large parts of the historical text and the letters, both of which were taken to Leningrad and not returned after the war with the other material (1958).

The **Chester Beatty collection**, however, was housed in Dublin and suffered no damage from the war. Two of the books were published before the war: the *Hymns* (1938) and the *Homilies* (1934), and a facsimile edition is in the process of being published, four volumes being already out. These include the fragments from the historical work concerning King Narseh, etc.⁷

More recently the remains from another Egyptian Manichean community of the 4th century were discovered at **Kellis** (Ismant el-Kharab).⁸ Among the texts recovered are fragments of canonical and other doctrinal texts, psalms and liturgical texts, Coptic-Syriac glossaries of Manichean technical terms, amulets, and biblical and apocryphal texts.

The Greek Mani Codex⁹

The second important find from Egypt became known much later. In the late sixties a minuscule Greek codex in the papyrus collection of the university of **Cologne** was noticed. The codex was successfully opened and preserved in 1969 and the contents made known to an astounded world of Manichean scholars in 1970 by **A. Henrichs and L. Koenen**. A preliminary edition and translation was given in two articles (1975-78) and a translation by R. Cameron and J. Dewey in 1979. A complete edition containing text and facsimiles was published in 1985 by Koenen and C. Roemer.

⁶ See Lieu, 1994, pp. 64-77.

⁷ See Robinson, 1992, Tardieu, 1989, Böhlig, 1992, Pedersen, 1997.

⁸ See Gardner and Lieu, 1966; Lieu, 1994, pp. 87-89.

⁹ See Lieu, 1994, pp. 78-87.



<http://essenes.net/cologne.html>

The date of the codex is somewhat debated. While the original editors thought it might be from as early as the 4th century, paleographic analyses have led others to suggest 5th- or even 7/8th-century dates.¹⁰

The Coptic Gnostic texts

The other major find from Egypt was that of the Coptic Gnostic library at Nag Hammadi. This was discovered in December of 1945. The publication of these manuscripts has also proceeded very slowly, but by now most of the material has been both published in facsimile and translated.¹¹

The Qumran texts

Barely two years after the Nag Hammadi discovery, in 1947, another sensational find was made, this time in Judea, where Bedouin boys discovered a cache of manuscripts in caves on the shore of the Dead Sea. Publication of these texts has proceeded even more slowly, for political reasons, but today all, or almost all, the material has been published in facsimile and in translation.

The importance of the Gnostic texts and the **Qumran**, or **Dead Sea scrolls**, to which we should also add the fair number of apocryphal scriptures appended to the Old and New Testaments, for the study of Manicheism lies in the fact that they provide a good look into what kind of literature circulated in the near East in the 2nd-3rd centuries C.E, during the formative period of Mani's ideas.

Among the books that Mani must have read or at least known about are a number of apocalypses associated with various Old Testament patriarchs, especially Adam, his son Seth (Sethil), Enosh, Shem, and Enoch. Thus we find quoted in the *Codex* passages from the apocalypses of all these. In addition a lost Book of Noah, fragments of which were found at Qumran, contained elements also found in the *Book of Giants* (see below).

Connected with these texts was another commonly referred to in the sources as the *Book of Giants*. This book contains elaborations on the theme of the Old Testament *nephilim* or giants, and involves also the patriarchs. Mani was apparently fascinated by the stories in it and adapted the whole book for his own use, and it was included in his canon.

Of particular interest were diverse books featuring Enoch, some of which contained astronomical material (fragments from Qumran) that Mani may have incorporated into his own creation myth, other mythological material is also found in the *Book of Giants* (fragments from Qumran).

Among the Gnostic texts we find some of the same material, e.g., *Apocalypse of Adam*, but more important are the texts appended to the New Testament, especially the *Apocalypse* and *Gospel of Thomas*.

¹⁰ See Gardner and Lieu, 1996.

¹¹ See Robinson, ed., [1996?].

Conferences

Several conferences on Manichean subjects have been arranged beginning in the early seventies but especially from the late eighties onward:

- First International Conference on Manichaeism: Lund, Sweden, August 1987.
- Second International Congress on Manichaeism: Bonn, August 1989.
- International Symposium on the Manichaean Nous: Louvain, Belgium, August 1991.
- Third International Congress on Manichaeism: Rende-Amantea, Calabria, Italy, August-September 1993.
- Fourth International Congress on Manichaeism: Berlin, July 1997.
- Fifth International Congress on Manichaeism: Naples, September 2001.
- Sixth International Congress on Manichaeism: Oxford, July 2002.

Chronology of Manichean studies

- 1517 Luther's 95 theses in Wittenberg
- 1578 Spangenberg refutes accusations against Luther
- 1668 Henri de Valois discovers the *Acta Archelai*
- 1698 L. A. Zacagni publishes first edition of the *Acta Archelai*
- publication of various Classical texts
- 1700 Thomas Hydes' *Veterum Persarum et Parthorum et Medorum religionis historia*
- publication of Syriac works (St. Ephrem, etc.)
- 1734-39 Isaac de Beausobre's *Histoire critique de Manichée et du manichéisme*
- 1831 F. C. Baur's *Das manichäische Religionssystem, nach den Quellen neu untersucht und entwickelt*
- 1842 W. Cureton publishes Muhammad al-Shahrastani's (b. 1086) *Kitâb al-milal wa'l-nihal*
- 1862 G. Flügel publishes the section on Manicheism in Ibn al-Nadim's *Fihrist al-'ulûm* (compl. 987)
- 1878 E. Sachau publishes the *Chronology* of Abu Rayhân al-Biruni (973-1048)
- 1889 K. Kessler, *Mani*, vol. I
- 1898 H. Pognon publishes extracts from the *Book of scholies* by Theodore bar Konai (6th cent.)
- 1902 First German Turfan expedition (Albert Grünwedel from the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin)
- 1904-05 Second German Turfan expedition
- 1904 F. W. K. Müller publishes two articles containing manuscript remains from Turfan
- 1904 Carl Salemann publishes Manichean texts from the St. Petersburg collection
- 1905 C. H. Beeson publishes complete edition of the *Acta Archelai*
- 1905-07 Third German Turfan expedition (Albert Grünwedel and Albert von Le Coq)
- 1908 Le Coq publishes the first Manichean Turkish text
- 1910 A. Scher publishes complete edition of the *Book of scholies* by Theodore bar Konai
- 1911 E. Chavannes and P. Pelliot publish the Chinese *Traité manichéen*
- 1912 C. W. Mitchell, anti-Manichean writings of St. Ephrem
- 1923 Paul Pelliot publishes two important studies of Chinese Manicheism
- 1923 the first of a series of studies by the American Iranist A. V. William Jackson
- 1924 I. Scheftelowitz's book on the origin of Manicheism and the mystery of salvation
- 1930-32 Carl Schmidt and Chester Beatty discover the Coptic Manichean texts in Egypt
- 1932 Jackson's *Researches on Manicheism*
- 1933 C. Schmidt and H. J. Polotsky, *Ein Mani-Fund in Ägypten*
- 1934 H. J. Polotsky, *Manichäische Homilien*, Manichean Manuscripts in the Chester Beatty Collection
- 1949 H.-C. Puech's *Le manichéisme, son fondateur, sa doctrine*
- 1969 discovery of the Greek Mani Codex
- 1963 O. Klíma's *Manis Zeit und Leben*
- 1965 G. Widengren's *Mani and Manichaeism*
- 1988 *Manichaeism studies 1. Proceedings of the First International Conference on Manichaeism, Lund studies in African and Asian religions*, Lund

THE SOURCES

There are few reliable historical sources, especially contemporary, for early Sasanian history. In order to reconstruct the early history of the new empire and its religion we have at our disposal the following:

- 1) a handful of contemporary, but often fragmentary, rock inscriptions;
- 2) the Manichean literature, some of which is from the 3rd century;
- 3) the Zoroastrian literature, which is extant only in much later manuscripts;
- 4) the non-Iranian sources, both contemporary and later.

The Sasanian inscriptions

Of the Sasanian inscriptions those of Shapur I, Kerdir, and Narseh I stand out both in volume and contents. Shapur's long inscription in Parthian, Middle Persian, and Greek on the Ka'ba-ye Zardosht at Naqsh-e Rostam near Persepolis (in southern Iran) describes his empire, his wars with the Romans, the foundation of numerous fires in the name of members of the royal family and contains lists of the members of the royal administration under his grandfather Pabag, his father Ardashahr, and himself. It concludes with an injunction to his successor to be even more obedient and of better will towards the gods so that the gods may help him as they did Shapur.

The inscriptions of Kerdir, written only in Middle Persian, comprise (1) an inscription on the Ka'ba-ye Zardosht (KKZ), placed beneath the Middle Persian version of that of Shapur, which it continues directly by stating in the first sentence that "And I, Kerdir, the *mowbed*, have been obedient and of good will towards the gods and Shapur, King of Kings"; (2) a longer inscription, containing the entire text of KKZ—with minor divergences—plus the story of Kerdir's vision (see below); this text is found in two copies, one at Naqsh-e Rostam (KNRm), on the rock wall facing the Ka'ba-ye Zardosht, and one at Sar-e Mashhad (KSM) in southern Fars; and (3) a short inscription containing a résumé of the thoughts expressed in the other inscriptions located at Naqsh-e Rajab (KNRb), not far from Naqsh-e Rostam. All these inscriptions must have been composed under Wahram II, who is the last king mentioned in them.

The inscription of Narseh at Paikuli was composed about 293 to justify Narseh's right to the throne after he had deposed the former crown prince.

The Zoroastrian writings

The Pahlavi (Middle Persian) books were written down only in the 8th-9th centuries and contain very little historical information about the 3rd-4th centuries, notably about Mani and the Manicheans, that can be used with much confidence.

The Manichean writings

The Manichean sources are of various kinds. We have original Manichean literature, dating from the 3rd century onward, as well as references to or descriptions of Manicheism in non-Manichean literature.

Original Manichean writings are of two main types: 1. Primary sources—writings by Manicheans and 2. Secondary sources—quotations from Manichean writings in the works of their opponents.

1. Primary sources (texts written by Manicheans):

- Coptic papyrus books, especially the *Kephalaia*, the *Homilies*, and the *Psalm book*;
- the Greek codex discovered in Cologne, which contains details of Mani's early life and career.
- Latin texts, especially the *Epistula Fundamenti*;
- Iranian texts in Persian, Parthian, and Sogdian, which contain fragments from a large variety of writings;
- Old Turkish texts;
- a few fragments in Tokharian;
- three Chinese texts.

2. Secondary sources (texts written about Manicheans by non-Manicheans):

Texts in Latin, Greek, Syriac, Arabic, Armenian, Pahlavi (Middle Persian), modern Persian, and Chinese.

Recently Werner Sundermann subjected all the Iranian Manichean sources for the history of Manicheism to a critical scrutiny in order to determine the literary character of the different works and their age and thus facilitate their use as historical sources.¹² One of the conclusions of his meticulous and convincing study is that many of the details involving persons and places found in the Manichean sources belong to fairly late hagiographic compositions and can therefore not without reservations be assumed to represent historical facts. His results are also valid for the non-Iranian texts, both the Coptic ones, which contain many biographical data about Mani, and even the *Cologne Mani Codex*. These limitations of the sources must be kept in mind when one discusses the relationship between Manicheism and Sasanian politics and religion.

The non-Iranian sources

The non-Iranian sources comprise writings mainly in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Armenian, and Arabic. Some of these date back to the 3rd-4th centuries, but most of them are much later. Among the most important authors are the Syriac Theodore bar Konai and such Muslim writers as Ibn al-Nadim, Biruni, Shahrastani, and Tabari. Some of these clearly based their accounts on original Manichean writings. Thus both Ibn al-Nadim and Biruni state explicitly that they were acquainted with Manichean books and quote from them.

¹² Sundermann, 1986c, 1987.

THE LIFE OF MANI

Birth and early childhood

¹³The life of Mani is known from various sources, among the most important are the *Fihrist* of the great Muslim historian of religions Ibn al-Nadim and the *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis*; the *Acta* and Bar Konai also contain “complete” vitae. There are basically two different versions, which we may term friendly and hostile.

According to the *Shabuhragân*, the chapter on “the coming of the prophet,” quoted by **Biruni**, Mani was born in **Babylonia** in a village (*qariya*) called Mardinu on the upper canal of Kutha, in the year 527 of the astronomers of Babylon (= Seleucid era), four years after the beginning of the reign of king Adharban (i.e., King Ardawan/Artabanus V; the last of the Arsacid—or Parthian—kings, who was overthrown by Ardashahr). According to the *Shabuhragân* he was born on **1 Nisan**. According to the *Kephalaia* (14.24-28) he was born in the month of Pharmouthi (= Nisan), and according to the Chinese *Compendium* he was born in year 527 governed by the twelfth constellation (*mo-xie*) on 8.12.13 of Jian-an of emperor Xian of the posterior Han dynasty. All this amounts to 8 Nisan 527 Seleucid era = 14 April 216 C.E.

The name Mani was a fairly common name at the time,¹⁴ from which we have Greek Μανιχαῖος and Latin Manichaeus, both apparently from Syriac *Mânî hayyâ* “the living Mani.” **Biruni** has the note that according to one of his sources “Mani was called by the Christians **Corbicius** [Qurbiquis] the son of Patecius [Fatiq].”¹⁵ The name Corbicius is also found in **Bar Konai**’s account: according to Bar Konai Mani’s name was Qurqabios, and he came from the town of Abramia. This is in fact related to the account given in the *Acta*, where Mani’s name is given as **Corbicius** (or similar acc. to the mss.; **Augustine** has **Urbicius**).

Mani’s mother, al-Nadim says, was Mays, Utakhim, or **Marmaryam**. In a Chinese text her name is Man-yan. According to al-Nadim she was of the **Ashghaniyya family**, which also seems to be confirmed by the Chinese text, where it is said she was of the family of Kamsaragan, a **Parthian** noble family.

Mani’s father, Fatiq (Futtuq = **Pateg** in the Iranian texts = Pattikios in the *Codex*) was from Hamadan and of the **Hashkaniyya family**.¹⁶ He had moved to Babylon and lived at **Ctesiphon** or al-Mada’in, where he frequented a temple of idols (possibly belonging to a sect of Sabeian astrologers¹⁷). According to al-Nadim (pp. 773-74), one day one of the idols cried out to him, “Fatiq, do not eat meat, do not drink wine, and stay away from any sexual commerce!” He heard the cry three days three times each. After that he joined a **Baptist**¹⁸ community, the **Mughtasila**. At this time his wife was pregnant.

According to al-Nadim the head of the Baptist sect that Fatiq joined was **al-Haysa**. In the *Codex* he is called **Alkhasaios** and in the Latin texts **Elchasai** (see *Enc. Iran.*) He is first mentioned (ab. 220) by Bishop Hippolytus, who reports that a certain Alcibiades from Syria had brought to Rome a book according to which sin could be atoned for by a second baptism. The book had originally been revealed to Elchasai in the third year of Trajan (100/1) by angels. According to Epiphanius (*Panarion*, ca. 375), Elchasai had become the founder of a new community after rejecting the bloody sacrifice in the Easter ceremony. In the new community no meat was therefore consumed. Otherwise the religion was scrupulously observed: circumcision, monotheism, rejection of divination and astrology, etc. As he considered the fire a devilish instrument of the worst practices of the old religion, he made water the center of his own. In addition to the old religion Elchasai had adopted the modern christology, according to which Jesus was the last of a series of Messiahs starting with Adam. He used texts from both the Old and the New Testaments, but never the writings of Paul.

According to al-Nadim’s sources Mani had a deformed right foot or two deformed feet.

¹³ On the dates of Mani’s life see Sundermann, 1987, 1988.

¹⁴ Puech, p. 33 with n. 103.

¹⁵ Sachau, p. 191.

¹⁶ Thus the tradition may have been that Mani was related to the ruling house of the Arsacids.

¹⁷ Tardieu, p. 7. On the Sabeans, see also F. de Blois, *Acta Orientalia* 1995.

¹⁸ Elchasaite, not Mandaean as Widengren categorically stated in 1965a, 26: “Mani grew up in a southern Babylonian, gnostic, more explicitly Mandaean, baptist community and there received impressions crucial to his future.” According to Widengren, *ibid.*, *passim*, the Mandaeans were heavily influenced by Parthian culture.—The Parthian term for “baptists” was probably *abšōdagān*, see Sundermann, 1977. See also Merkelbach, 1988.

When Mani was **four years old** (*Codex* 11.1ff.) he joined his father and was brought up by him among the Baptists. According to one of his biographers in the *Codex*, he was by then constantly guarded by the angels of light until the age of maturity.

The accounts of the *Acta*¹⁹ and **Bar Konai** are very different. According to the *Acta* the doctrine of dualism was invented at the time of the apostles by a certain extremely wealthy Saracene, **Scythianus**, who had received it from Pythagoras. His wife persuaded him to live in **Egypt** more than in the deserts. He had a pupil, **Terebinthus**, who wrote four books for him: the *Mysteries*, the *Chapters*, the *Gospel*, and the *Treasure*. Scythianus enjoyed discussing with the learned men in Judea, but eventually died while he was there, and Terebinthus fled to **Babylonia**. There he presented himself as being replete with all the wisdom of Egypt and called himself **Buddha**. Born of a virgin, he had been raised in the mountains by an angel. He discussed with the Mithraists, but converted nobody, except for an old woman. One morning he tried to fly off from the roof but fell down and broke his neck. The old woman buried him, but now that she was alone again, she bought a seven-year old boy as a slave. This was **Corbicius**, whom she immediately freed and began educating.

Bar Konai reports two versions of his early life. According to one the boy Qurqabios had been bought by a Baptist (*m^enaqq^ede*) sect. He came from the city of Abrumia, and his father was Patiq. When the Baptists excluded him from their community they called him *mânâ d.bîštâ* “vessel of evil,” hence the name Mani.

The other account is largely parallel to that of the *Acta*, with some differences in detail. The boy had been set free by the wife of Bados, who was a pupil of Skuntianos.

From his first revelation at the age of twelve to his coming forth at twenty-four

At the **age of twelve** Mani had his first revelation, brought him by the angel **al-Tawm**, that is the Companion in Nabatean (*Codex* *suzugos*, MPers. *narjamig*), who told him to leave the Baptist community and revealed to him the *Mysteries*. Similarly Biruni reports that the revelation came to him in his thirteenth year, i.e., year 539 of the Seleucid era. in the 2nd year of Ardashahr. The name of the angel is clearly reminiscent of that of the apostle **Thomas** “the Twin” (i.e., brother of Jesus), whose *Gospel* or *Acts* was circulated and read widely throughout the area at this period.

Mani spent his youth among the Baptists, often in disputes with them over their practices, in particular he questioned the usefulness of baptizing food in order to minimize the adverse effects upon the body, especially the production of excrements.²⁰ By extension he also showed that the body itself cannot be purified by water. Instead the purity that is mentioned in the scriptures by Jesus consists in **knowing how to separate light from darkness and life from death**.²¹ His opponents accused him of being anti-Christ and false prophet. Finally a council of elders was convoked and explanations were demanded from Pattikios, who, however, accepted no responsibility and told them to ask Mani himself. The council wanted to know why he had not followed the rules of the community, and Mani answered by pointing out that they were not at all in accord with the teachings of and examples set by Jesus himself. He also quoted Elchasai, the founder of the sect, who in visions heard the water say that the constant ablutions were hurting it, the earth say that the plow was hurting it, and the bread say that cooking was hurting it, and he therefore stopped washing and plowing and told his disciples to stop baking bread.²²

From his coming forth at twenty-four to his incarceration

For twelve years Mani kept his revelation a secret, but when he was 24, al-Tawm announced that the time had come for him to come forth and proclaim the true gospel. The revelation is referred in the *Codex* as follows: When Mani was [twenty]-four, in the year that Ardashahr (Dariardaxar) conquered Hatra and in which Shapur crowned himself with the grand diadem, in the month of Pharmouthi, on the eighth day of the lunar month, the Lord sent for him.

The day Mani came forth was according to the Manichean tradition cited by al-Nadim as the day when the crown was placed on King Shapur’s head, Sunday, the first of Nisan, when the sun was in Aries; the year: 551 of the

¹⁹ Puech, pp. 22-23.

²⁰ *Codex*, 82.

²¹ *Codex*, 84-85.

²² *Codex*, 96-97.

Seleucid era = 12 April 240 CE. His father and two followers, Simon and Zako, were with him on this occasion.

Coming out at this age as a receiver of a revelation is a feature Mani took from Jesus; however, while Jesus preached the coming of a **paraclete** (holy ghost),²³ Mani preached that the paraclete had come and that he was he, and that he was the seal of the prophets.²⁴

After this, like Paul, Mani went traveling, but unlike Paul, who preached about Jesus, Mani preached about himself.²⁵ His first trip was to the east. He boarded a ship at Shiren in Rew-Ardakhshahr on the Gulf, and sailing along the Persian coast to Makran, visiting Christian communities in the islands, he arrived in the country of **Turan** in the Indus delta (close to modern Baluchistan). He was said to have undertaken this travel to emulate the apostle **Thomas**, who had traveled to India and, according to the legend, had founded the Christian communities along the way. In his *Acts* Thomas is said to have been greatly successful in converting powerful persons. Similarly, Mani is said to have converted the king of Turan by performing various magical tricks, and the king became convinced that Mani was indeed a reincarnation of the Buddha himself. Upon his return to Rew-Ardaxshahr Mani sent his father and his brother (Hannī = John) to Turan to take care of the newly-founded community.²⁶ According to the *Kephalaia* his travels took place during the last years of Ardashahr I, and he **returned in the year Ardashahr died and his son Shapur became king**, possibly in 242.²⁷ He traveled from Persia to Babylonia, and **Mesene**, where according to the hagiographers, he gained a supporter in the local king, a certain Mihrshah, brother of the king, who is not known from the royal inscriptions, however. Carrying a letter of recommendation, he made the acquaintance of Shapur's brother Peroz/Firuz, who brought him to the king of kings.²⁸ Although W. Sundermann has shown that these stories are probably not to be taken literally,²⁹ nevertheless they do suggest that Mani counted royalty among his early Iranian followers. Shapur, who had expected to kill him straightway, was awed by the prophet³⁰ and granted him and his followers the right to travel throughout the land.³¹ According to the *Kephalaia* he traveled widely in Persia, Parthia, and Adiabene (Azerbaijan), all the way to the eastern Roman frontier regions. He even spent a few years in the royal entourage.

At this point we may very well ask ourselves, why did Mani go directly to the king and why did Shapur receive Mani with honors and favor, if this is what he truly did? One explanation is suggested by the account (found in several texts) of Mani's predecessors. According to this account Zarathustra brought the true religion to the land of Persia to King Hystaspes or Vishtasp. Similarly, Mani wanted to present himself as bringing the true religion to Persia to the then reigning king.

Another possible, or concomitant, reason may be that Mani was actually aware of the ongoing Mazdayasnian restoration and reformation and the fact that one of its aims was to determine what should be regarded as part of the true Mazdayasnian religion. Perhaps Mani saw his chance and seized it and presented his own religion to Shapur as the true version of the revelation of their prophet Zarathustra and presented it in a book dedicated to the king, the *Shabuhragān*, suitably clothed in the garment of Zoroastrian religious terminology.³² Mani also thought that the revelation of Zarathustra, just as the revelations of the Old Testament prophets and the Buddha, was but one part of the truth, but we may safely assume that he took care not to flaunt this heresy at the court.

But if this is what happened, it is also certain that Mani's claim cannot have been unconditionally accepted by all, and there can be little doubt that there was considerable opposition to Mani in clerical circles, in particular from Kerdir, who was at the beginning of his career.

Shapur himself did not adopt the religion of Mani, and, as pointed out by Sundermann,³³ the texts are quite unanimous in depicting Shapur only as a benevolent protector and benefactor of the religion, but the fact that Mani

²³ John 14:26, 15:26.

²⁴ Bīrūnī.

²⁵ Tardieu, p. 27.

²⁶ Parthian M 4575f.

²⁷ *Kephalaia*, 15.27-33.

²⁸ Al-Nadīm.

²⁹ Sundermann, 1987, 57-63.

³⁰ Cf. Gagé, 334f.

³¹ Cf. Sundermann, 1987, 69-70, 79-81.

³² See, e.g., Sundermann, 1979b, 112.

³³ Sundermann, *BT* 11, 105

received letters of protection from the king is mentioned in many texts, including the *Kephalaia* and a very interesting Parthian text published by Sundermann, and may be regarded as true.³⁴ In the Parthian text we learn that Mani received a letter from the king, the contents of which is revealed by Mani's reaction to it: When the letter was read to Mani he blessed the king and said to his children that although King Shapur is more violent and hard than many rulers, and though he is called sinner and evildoer throughout all countries, still to Mani he has shown friendliness and not ordered any evil to be done to his children and protected them from enemies.³⁵ Mani is further said to have referred to the letter in his interview with Wahram I as reported in the Coptic Manichean *Homilies*, during which he reminded the king that Shapur himself had written to the notables of the reign asking them to protect Mani from harm.³⁶

Why Shapur chose to treat Mani the way he did we do not know, and we can only speculate about his political motives. But in contrast to Shapur, who did not himself adopt the religion, several members of the royal family appear to have been more convinced, among them Ohrmazd, son of Shapur, who is featured in several Manichean texts (see below).

Back in Rew-Ardaxshahr he wrote his exposition of his system in honor of the king and dedicated to him: the *Shabuhragân*, his only book in Persian. He also accompanied the king in one of his campaigns, according to Alexander of Lycopolis³⁷ the one against Valerian (ca. 255/6). Back again, he turned his missionary eyes to the east and went off to Media, Parthia, and Khorasan, where he founded a community at Abarshahr, the western capital of Khorasan.

Back again he settled down at Weh-Ardaxshahr near Ctesiphon, on the western bank of the Tigris. Here, during 262-63, he set down the tenets of his faith and organized the missions. He sent Adda and Pateg to the west, Ammo to the north-east, and others elsewhere. He himself took care of the north-west, traveling to Bet Garmaye and Adiabene, strengthening the already existing communities and founding others.

Thus throughout Shapur's reign, for over thirty years, Mani and his followers were free to propagate their ideas, and by 270 Mani's religion must have had firm footholds throughout the Sasanian empire.

After the death of Shapur the sources suggest that Mani experienced both ups and downs in his relations with the court. Thus Shapur's successor Ohrmazd (I) did originally, before he became king, not favor the new religion and its prophet, though he may later have changed his mind; there are Parthian,³⁸ Sogdian, and Old Turkish³⁹ fragments of the story of his conversion.

In the *Acta* the above part of the story is resumed as follows: When Corbicius was twelve, the old woman died, leaving him her worldly goods, including the four books he had written. Corbicius went to the city of the Persian king (anonymous in the *Acta*), where he changed his name to Manes. He acquired all the knowledge in the land, as well as that of the four books, and three disciples: Thomas, Addas, and Hermas. He translated the four books and claimed authorship after having inserted much new material, "similar to the tales of old wives." He then sent two of his followers as missionaries: Thomas to Egypt and Addas to Scythia (var. Syria), while Hermas stayed with him.

Last days

Under **Wahram I** Mani was at first in favor, but then a change apparently took place, which has been ascribed to Mani's unsuccessful attempt at healing a member of the royal family.⁴⁰ No doubt, the Mazdean clergy saw its own chance to discredit Mani, and accusations against him to the king, channeled through Kerdir, as we know, led to his final imprisonment and death.⁴¹ At the end of the reign of Wahram I, probably in 277, Mani was accused before the king by the Sasanian clergy including the high priest **Kerdir** and was thrown in jail, where he died.⁴²

³⁴ Sundermann, *BT* 11, text 11.2.

³⁵ Cf. Sundermann, 1987, 69-70.

³⁶ *Homilies*, 48; see also Sundermann, 1986c, 255; 1987, 69-70.

³⁷ Adam, p. 54.

³⁸ Sundermann, *BT* 11, text 22.

³⁹ Geng Shimin-Klimkeit-Laut.

⁴⁰ Bīrūnī; cf. the Middle Persian text M3 in Boyce, *Reader*, 44-45, and notes on p. 45; and Henning, 1942, 951 [91]. See also Sundermann, 1987, 90.

⁴¹ *Homilies*, 45.

⁴² Tr. Dodge, 794.

According to al-Nadim Wahram had him executed and the two halves of his body hung at two different gates of the city of Gondeshapur. Al-Nadim quotes other sources to the effect that he had already been imprisoned by Shapur but released by Wahram and that he had died in prison.

According to Biruni Manicheism had increased by degrees under Ardashahr, Shapur, and Ohrmazd. When Wahram I came to the throne, however, he ordered a search for Mani, and when he had found him he said, "This man has come forward calling people to destroy the world. It will be necessary to begin by destroying him before anything of his plans should be realized." According to Biruni it was "well known" that the king had Mani killed, stripped off his skin, filled it with grass, and hung it up at the gate of Gondeshapur, still known as the Mani gate. Wahram also killed a number of Mani's followers.

In the *Acta* the rest of the story goes as follows: When a son of the king fell ill a large reward was offered to whoever would cure him, and Manes went to the king and told him he would cure the boy. The boy, however, died, and Manes was thrown in jail, where he was put in heavy chains. When the two disciples returned without having had any success with the Christians, who had considered their teaching to be inspired by the Antichrist, Manes made them obtain some Christian books, which he read, looking for references to dualism, then adapted the Christian teaching to his own, only retaining the name of Christ, thinking that when people saw it they would believe his two missionaries were Christians. After having found the word "paraclete" in one of the books, he began calling himself the paraclete. When the Persian king was informed about this he decided Manes had to be punished! After being warned in a dream, Manes bribed the jailer and escaped to the fortress of Arabion. From there he sent a letter with Turbo to Marcellus, friend of Archelaus, saying he was coming, that is, to Karkhar and later Diodoris, where the great disputations took place. Meanwhile the king had subjected the jailer to persuasion, which first made him reveal what had happened but also killed him. Manes fled again, back to the fortress, where he was apprehended and taken to the king, who was very unhappy about the two deaths, that of his son and of his jailer. He ordered Manes to be skinned and hung before the gates of the city, his skin to be inflated by chemicals, and his flesh to be given to the birds.

MANI AND THE SASANIANS

The rise of Manicheism coincided with a change of dynastic rule in Iran. When Mani was born, Iran was still ruled by the **Arsacids**, or **Parthians**. The Parthian rulers had, some 400 years earlier, replaced the Seleucids, who in turn were the descendants of Alexander's generals.

When Mani was about 10, the last of the Parthian kings was overthrown by a certain Ardashahr (Ardasher) of dubious ancestry, who established the **Sasanian** dynasty. Ardashahr, his son Shapur, and Shapur's descendants consolidated and expanded the empire over the next fifty years, especially toward the west into Roman territories.

When Mani was 24, his Companion announced that the time had come for him to come forth. This day was according to the Manichean tradition the day when the crown was placed on King Shapur's head, Sunday, the first of Nisan (April), when the sun was in Aries.

After traveling about for many years Mani called upon Shapur's brother Firuz, who brought him to the king of kings. According to the Manichean tradition Shapur had expected to kill him straightway, but was awed by the prophet and granted him and his followers the right to travel throughout the land.

About 35 years later, possibly in 276, at the end of the reign of Shapur's second son, Wahram I, Mani was—according to the Manichean tradition—accused before the king by the Sasanian clergy and was thrown in jail, where he died.

There are still a number of unsolved problems, especially of chronology, in connection with the beginnings of the Sasanian empire. Ardashahr, son of King Pabag, and a relative of Lord Sasan, fought a decisive battle against the Arsacid King Ardawan V at Hormozgan in Media on 28 April 224, during which he assumed the title of king of kings.⁴³ After almost 20 years spent in efforts to expand and consolidate of the empire, Ardashahr crowned his son Shapur as co-regent in about 240, and Shapur became king of kings at the death of his father in early 242.

Shapur continued the work begun by his father and added other territories to the empire, especially in the west,

⁴³ On Ardashahr see, e.g., J. Wiesehöfer, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* II/4, 1986, pp. 371-76.

after fighting three victorious battles against three Roman emperors. After a long reign of thirty years, Shapur died in 274. He was succeeded by two of his sons, both of whom reigned only briefly: Ohrmazd I reigned for only about a year and was succeeded by his brother Wahram I, who reigned until 276, when he was succeeded by *his* son, Wahram II.

It was during Wahram II's long reign (276-93) that the career of the high priest Kerdir, which had started under Shapur I, reach a high point, a fact that Kerdir commemorated in several inscriptions.

After the death of Wahram II *his* son, Wahram III, was no doubt to have become king of kings, however, he seems to have been under some undesirable influence, and the nobles and dignitaries of the empire decided to offer the crown to Shapur's youngest son, Narseh, who at the time bore the title of king of Armenia. Wahram III and his supporters were defeated, and Narseh accepted the crown and the empire in 293. The events leading to his coronation were recorded in detail in a long inscription on a monument raised near modern Paikuli, at the place where Narseh met the dignitaries and where he accepted their offer. In this inscription King Amaró of Hira is mentioned, who in a Coptic Manichean text is connected with the Manicheans.

The death of the founder did not prevent the new religion from growing and spreading out from Iran. By the time the Sasanian empire was overthrown by the armies of Islam in the mid-7th century, Manicheism had spread into Egypt and North Africa in the west, and to the borders of China and beyond in the east. Thus, at times, Manicheism reached from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans, before it was eventually destroyed by the Catholic church in Europe and wiped out in the east by new conquerors.

So, at some time, Manicheism actually spread over the entire hemisphere, reaching from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans, being a veritable world religion.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Sundermann, 1986, 11

MANICHEISM IN IRAN AFTER MANI'S DEATH

In keeping with the first of his Ten Points, one of the first things Mani did was to concern himself with missions. Not only did he send out missions, both east and west, as soon as possible, but he himself also traveled extensively. From various sources we know that before he approached the rulers of the Sasanian empire he traveled to various countries east of the empire. Other sources add that he went to Tibet and China preaching his religion before returning to Iran, where he was seized and killed under Wahram I.⁴⁵ Here the most reliable source is probably Ibn al-Nadim's *Fihrist*, in which we are told that Mani traveled from country to country for 40 years before he met with Shapur I, who granted him the right to teach his religion in the Persian empire. After this, Ibn al-Nadim says, Mani preached the religion in India, China, and in Khorasan, and left a disciple in all these places. This account of Mani's travels has now been partly confirmed in the Coptic, Greek, and Iranian texts. Thus, in the *Kephalaia* it is said that in the last year of King Ardashahr Mani set out to preach and that he traveled to India and preached to the Indians.⁴⁶ And in a Parthian text we are told that after Mani returned from India he despatched two missionaries back there.⁴⁷ According to another variant of the Manichean missionary history it was after Mani earned the disapproval and anger of King Shapur I that he went to India, where he stayed until Shapur was dead.⁴⁸

Unfortunately, not much is known about Mani's stay in India, and what is known comes from second-hand sources. The most important witness is a fragmentary but substantial Parthian text, which contains an account of the conversion of the king of Turan, a country located in northeastern Baluchistan, with the capital Qusdar.⁴⁹ This account was not written by Mani, who of the Iranian languages used only Middle Persian, but by his disciples probably after his death. We may reasonably assume that this text uses earlier material, including eyewitness reports from his journey.

It is typical of the report that it mentions the supernatural phenomenon of levitation.⁵⁰ We know that levitation played an important role in Buddhism, being one of the supernatural acts that could be performed by buddhas, bodhisattvas, gods, and others, by levitating either themselves or humans of their choice. This is not, however, something Mani only learned from Buddhism, since people all over the world and at all times have dreamt of and desired to possess the power of levitation. In the case of Mani, the *Cologne Mani Codex* shows that Mani knew many stories about holy men levitating. The importance of levitation rather lies in the fact that such stories would strongly appeal to a Buddhist audience. Mani himself must have found it very efficient, so much so that he decided to try it out on King Shapur himself, we are told, and it was this miracle that according to the later tradition finally led to Shapur's conversion. Regarding the miracles worked by Mani, al-Biruni has an interesting note in his *Chronology*, where he reports that there were two groups among Mani's followers, one that denied that Mani ever worked miracles, and another, which maintained the opposite, quoting the fact that Mani levitated with King Shapur, and also that the prophet himself sometimes rose to heaven and stayed there for several days before he came down again.⁵¹

Though it is not, of course, likely that Mani actually performed miracles, that does not mean that people did not believe he did. Religions throughout the world for thousands of years have demonstrated that not only is man willing to believe in the supernatural, but also, given the right circumstances, he will go to extremes to convince his fellow man that *his* particular kind of superstition is the only true one. We know that the miracles reported at the death of Christ quickly spread and were believed by an ever-growing number. There is no reason to assume that people in the Near and Middle East were not equally impressed by the miracles that were reported concerning Mani. In the case of the kings that Mani converted, or at least won the favor of, reports of levitation concerning them must have been believed very soon after their own demise, or even before, again given the right circumstances.

During the last years of Mani, the Manichean movement experienced ups and downs in Iran itself, Manicheism

⁴⁵ Biruni, *Chronology*, p. 206; Sachau, p. 192.

⁴⁶ *Kephalaia*, 15.25; Böhlig, 1980, p. 86; Sundermann, 1986a, 12a.

⁴⁷ Sundermann, *BT* 11, 56f.

⁴⁸ Ya'qūbī, in Taqīzāda-Šīrāzī, p. 104.20-23.

⁴⁹ Sundermann, 1986, 13b (top).

⁵⁰ Cf. Sundermann, 1987, 42-43.

⁵¹ Sachau, 191. Cf. Kirdēr's vision.

being sometimes violently persecuted, then again left in peace.⁵² After the prophet's death, however, Manicheans were vigorously persecuted, and it was at this time that the strong eastward movement started. Ibn al-Nadim says,

“after Chosroes [actually, Bahram I] had executed and gibbeted *Mani* and forbidden the people of his kingdom to dispute about the religion, he began to slay the followers of Mani wherever he found them. So they did not stop fleeing from him until they had crossed the River of Balkh [=Amu Darya] and entered the realm of the Khan, with whom they remained.”⁵³

Then, during the rule of King Narseh (ruled 293-302), great-uncle of Wahram II and the last of Shapur's sons to become king of Iran, King Amaró of Hira became their patron and agreed to intercede for them with the king, and they were again left in peace for a while. After the death of Narseh, however, under his son Ohrmazd II, they were again persecuted.⁵⁴

Western spread⁵⁵

Mani himself sent Mar Adda to west into Roman territories, and several stories about his missionary activities are found in the Manichean texts, but it was probably under the protection of the Arab king and during the following persecutions that some Manicheans traveled further west and arrived in northern Egypt, where they founded several communities, from some of which we have recovered Manichean scriptures. From there they must have continued into the Roman provinces of North Africa, where we find them at the end of the century. Indeed, by then their presence was so noticeable that the emperor Diocletian was disturbed by reports that a new Persian religion was spreading throughout the empire and wrote (302?) to his proconsul in Africa, **Julianus**:

“We have heard that the Manichaeans ... have set up new and hitherto unheard of sects in opposition to older creeds so that they might cast out the doctrines vouchsafed to us in the past by divine favor--for the benefit of their own depraved doctrine. They have sprung forth very recently like new and **unexpected monstrosities** among the race of the Persians--a nation still hostile to us--and have made their way into our empire, where they are committing many outrages, disturbing the tranquillity of the people and even inflicting grave damage to the civic communities: our fear is that with the passage of time, they will endeavor, as usually happens, to infect the modest and tranquil Roman people of an innocent nature with the damnable customs and the perverse laws of the Persians as **with the poison of a malignant serpent**....

... the leaders together with their abominable scriptures shall be punished most severely, namely to be **burnt by fire**.”⁵⁶

According to the indigenous North-African tradition, it was a disciple of Mani's, Adimantus, who had brought the word to North Africa, but this is probably an apocryphal story, and Augustine suggested that this was none other than Adda himself, transformed.

Most of our information about Manicheism in this area comes from **Augustine**, who was a Manichean from he was 19 till he was 28 (373-82), and so is biased. Their main center was Carthage, but they probably spread throughout Tunisia. From there they then passed over to Rome.

Among the well-known Manichean Church dignitaries were the bishop Faustus, who, we are told, went to Rome to visit the community. The African Manicheans had their own compendium of Manichean doctrine, written in Latin: the *Epistula Fundamenti*, much of which survives.

During the lifetime of Augustine, several **anti-Manichean edicts** were issued: 20 between March 372 and June 445. This led to numerous Manicheans being brought in and interrogated about their beliefs. Many of these interrogations were recorded and reproduced by Augustine, among them Fortunatus and Felix.

Throughout the centuries, the Catholic church lead a relentless campaign against Manicheans. An edict in 527

⁵² See Lieu, 1985, pp. 80-81.

⁵³ Tr. Dodge, 802.

⁵⁴ Schmidt-Polotsky, 27-28 [28-29]. For their subsequent history, mostly obscure, see Lieu, 1985, pp. 81-85.

⁵⁵ See Lieu, *Manichaeism in Mesopotamia and the Roman East*, 1994.

⁵⁶ Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire*, 1985, pp. 91f.; text in Adam, pp. 82f.22

by Flavius Justinianus prompted various reactions from the Manicheans in Constantinople. One result was a public debate, which survives, between a Manichean (Photeinos!) and a Christian, Paul the Persian.⁵⁷ Justinian continued persecuting Manicheans, and they apparently disappeared from Byzantium by the end of the 6th century. After this the term Manichean remained a disparaging name of any heretical sect that professed any degree of dualism or gnosticism.

A Manichean-type sect is known from Bulgaria from the middle of the tenth century: the Bogomils, whose scriptures in Old Church Slavonic survive. Remnants of the Bogomils survived in Serbia and Bosnia into the 15th century.⁵⁸ In the 12th century, their ideas appear to have traveled as far as France, where it was continued among the Albigensians, or Catharists, the last of whom were burnt on a huge pyre at their last stronghold in southern France in 1244.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Lieu, 1985, pp. 170-73.

⁵⁸ Rudolph, pp. 374-75.

⁵⁹ See, e.g., Decret, 172-173; Rudolph, pp. 375-76.

Manicheism in the West: chronology

Rulers	Manicheism	
ca. 150		Marcion and Valentinus
179-216	Abgar IX of Edessa	Bardesanes
212-242	Ardawan V	
216 (527 S.E.)?		Mani born
224-42	Ardashahr I	travel to India (ca. 240?-242)
240; 242-72	Shapur I	coming forth (1 Nisan 551 S.E. = 12 April 240)
242?		interview with Shapur
ca. 255/6	campaign against Valerian	member of Shapur's entourage? conversion of Prince Ohrmazd the brave?
272-73	Ohrmazd I	
273-76	Wahram I	interview with Wahram 276?
276-93	Wahram II	death of Mani 276/?; persecution of Manicheans, who flee to central Asia
293	Wahram III	
293-302	Narseh	King Amaró of Hira patronizes them
ca. 300		anti-Manichean edict of Diocletian
302-309	Ohrmazd II	persecution of Manicheans
309-379	Shapur II	
306-373		Ephrem of Edessa (the Syrian)
ca. 350-450		<i>Acta Archelai</i>
374-7		the <i>Panarion</i> of Epiphanius of Salamis
ca. 398		Augustine, <i>Confessiones</i>
632-651	Yazdegerd III	last Sasanian king
732		anti-Manichean edict of Chinese emperor
763-840		official religion of the Uigur kingdom
791/2		the <i>Scholia</i> of Theodore Bar Konai
973-1048		Abu Rayhân al-Biruni, author of the <i>Chronology of Ancient Nations (Athar al-baqiya)</i> and a book on India
987		Ibn al-Nadim's <i>Fihrist al-'ulūm</i>
ca. 1000		Islamic invasion of Chinese Turkestan
1086		birth of al-Shahrastani, author of a book on heresies
1244		last of the Cathars burnt on a pyre in south of France
13th cent.		Mongols, end of Manicheism in Chin. Turk.

Eastern spread

In the east, the religion prospered in the company of Christianity, which had wandered into central Asia and Chinese Turkestan, too, in order to escape persecution by the Sasanian state, as well as by Buddhism.

So Manicheism remained and was even elevated to the rank of the state religion of the Uigur empire from 763 to 840. Finally, of course, it, as well as the other religions in central Asia and Chinese Turkestan, had to give way to the deluge of the oncoming Islamic conquerors.⁶⁰

As Manicheism traveled east, it was adopted by the various peoples it encountered on the way. These were Kushans (one page in Bactrian, the language of the Kushan empire survives), who ruled the formerly Greco-Bactrian kingdom, the Turkic Uigurs, whose western steppe empire stretched eastward from what is modern Kirgizistan, then the peoples who inhabited the area of Kucha on the northern silk Road, the so-called Tokharians or Kuchians—who spoke an Indo-European language unrelated to Iranian, as well as an Iranian people associated with them who lived in the area of Tumshuq and Maralbash, whose language was closely related to Sogdian and Khotanese. Two fragments of Manichean texts in Tokharian and Tumshuqese reveal the presence of Manicheans among them: a Manichean-Tokharian bilingual text and a Tumshuqese text dealing with questions of Manichean practices, as shown by W. B. Henning.

We also know that there was considerable trade between Persia and China throughout these centuries, not only from Central Asia, which made it possible for Manicheans and Christians from as far away as Mesopotamia, notably Syria, to travel to the far east. We should therefore keep in mind that the Silk Route permitted the movement of both communities settled in Central Asia and "new" emigrants from various places in the Middle East.

All of these combined were therefore probably the vectors of the faith which finally brought Manicheism and Christianity to the Turfan oasis.

Mar Ammo's adventures at the border of the Kushan empire

Recognizing the importance of missions Mani sent two of his close collaborators to teach the new religion in the world outside Iran, Adda to the west, i.e., the Roman empire, and Mar Ammo to the east, that is, to the east of the Iranian empire, to western Khorasan and its capital Abarsahr (modern Nishapur), and further on to the Kushan empire. The reason for the choice of Mar Ammo, we are told, was that he knew the Parthian (Pahlawanig) script and language.⁶¹

The arrival of Mar Ammo at the border of the Kushan empire is described in some detail in the Iranian texts: upon arriving at the border post the spirit of the border of Khorasan appeared in the shape of a young woman, who asked him "who are you and wherefrom do you come?" Mar Ammo responded that he was a believer and a disciple of the apostle Mani. The spirit refused to accept him and told him to return. Not daunted by this Mar Ammo remained fasting and praying for two days before the sun, which caused the apostle (= Mani) to appear before him. Mani told him to be brave and to recite the "Opening of the doors," which is another name for the *Treasure of the living*, one of the canonical scriptures of Manicheism. The following day the spirit again appeared before him and asked him why he had not returned. Mar Ammo replied that he had come a long way because of the religion. The spirit asked, which is this religion? Mar Ammo answered, "We do not consume meat and wine and we stay away from hurting the fire." This sounds straightforward enough, but we should recognize the cleverness of Mar Ammo's answer. Presumably he did not yet know what religion he was going to encounter in the Kushan empire, so to be on the safe side he assumed that it was either Mazdaism or Buddhism. In case it was the former, he assured the spirit that the religion he was bringing was one in which the fire is revered, the fundamental concept of Mazdaism; and in case it was the latter, he pointed to the fact that true Manicheans abstained from consuming meat and wine, a basic tenet of Buddhist teaching. The spirit then not surprisingly said that in her realm there were many such as him! But Mar Ammo then recited the *Opening of the doors*, and the spirit, convinced, that Mar Ammo was speaking the truth, declared that it would open up the entire gate of Khorasan for him. First, however, the spirit gave him a piece of Buddhist doctrine of its own, *The opening of the five doors*, which it explained to him with the help of parables, thus giving him a bit of his own medicine. The five doors are of course the five senses (*pañcendriya*), which only deceive and distract mankind, an important element of Buddhist doctrine.

⁶⁰ See Sundermann, "Der Manichäismus an der Seidenstrasse," 2001.

⁶¹ See Sundermann, 1986c, 242-253, on the Middle Persian, Parthian, and Sogdian versions of this story.

The fact that the Manicheans later knew that the Kushâns were Buddhists has now been nicely confirmed by the Dublin *Kephalaia* folio published by Tardieu. This contains the prophetology described earlier, but in greater detail as far as the Buddha is concerned. Here we are succinctly told that first “The Lord Zoroaster came to Persia to King Hystaspes and manifested the law that is still firmly established there.” and third that “Jesus Christ in the Roman west came to the entire western world.” Concerning the second coming, however, that of the Buddha, we read in great detail that “The lord Buddha, the wise, the blessed, came to the land of India and of the Kushâns. He manifested the law still firmly established in the whole of India and among the Kushâns. After him came the *aurentes* and *kebellos* in the east, the Middle of the World, and Parthia. He manifested the law of truth in all those lands.”⁶² The *aurentes* mentioned here and elsewhere (in the Berlin *Kephalaia*) are probably to be understood as “*arhantas*,” Buddhist saints, and Gardner (2005) convincingly compares *Kebeilos* or *Kebullos* the Jain concept of *kevalî*, used of those who have attained *kevala-jñâna* “the only wisdom, gnosis.”

Following the missions of Mar Ammo, who was later to become the legendary founder of the Dinavariyya sect of Manicheism in central Asia,⁶³ Manicheism spread quickly to the east, where it continued to pick up Buddhist elements.

⁶² Tardieu, 164.

⁶³ Lieu, 179.

Manicheism in the East: chronology

2nd cent. +	Parthians and Sogdians involved in the translation of Buddhist scriptures.
late 3rd c.	persecution of all foreign faiths in Sasanian Iran.
4th cent.	the Sogdian <i>Ancient Letters</i> found in the Dunhuang limes, containing correspondence with Sogdiana.
ab. 600	Chinese report about old Iranian religion (Zoroastrianism) in Sogdiana.
632	Nestorians free to practice their faith in China.
650-683	arrival of a Manichean teacher (Sogd. <i>mozhak</i>) at the Chinese court under Gaozung.
670-692	first Tibetan occupation in Xinjiang.
694	a Manichean missionary (fudodan = Sogd. aftadan, from Pers. haftadan "the Seventy") comes to the court of Empress Wu, bringing a copy of the Book of the Two Principles (Er zung jing).
705-715	the Muslim Qutaiba ibn Muslim conquers Sogdiana. The last Sogdian ruler, Afshin Dewastich flees to Mt Mug, but is captured and crucified.
719	a Manichean teacher (Sogd. <i>mozhak</i>) from Tokharistan comes to the Chinese court.
731	Commissioning of a summary of Manichean doctrines in Chinese (the Compendium).
732	Chinese imperial edict against Manicheism. Manicheism ousted from Chang'an, but not Loyang.
751	the Muslims drive back the Chinese at the river Talas in southern Kazakhstan.
755-63	court rebellion of the Sogdian merchant An Lushan.
762/3	the Uigur Bögü-qaghan, fighting on the Chinese side against the rebellion in Loyang, while there, is converted to Manicheism.
768	the Uigurs get permission to start building temples in the Chinese capitals and elsewhere.
789-866	second Tibetan occupation.
832	inscription of Karabalgasun.
840	the Kirghiz conquer the west-Turkic steppe empire, fall of Karabalgasun, and some Uigurs flee eastward finally reaching Qocho.
843	closing of Manichean temples in most Chinese cities, massacre of Manichean priests.
845	general ban on foreign religions in China.
856	the new Uigur state recognized by China; Manicheism continues to be official religion.
866	the Uigurs with the assistance of the Chinese of Shazhou drive the Tibetans out of the Tarim basin.
ca. 960	the Turkic Qarakhanids become Muslim.
ca. 1005	the Qarakhanids conquer Khotan.

Manicheism in Central Asia

After the Manicheans became the target of persecutions throughout the third and fourth centuries, they also fled to the northeast, as told briefly by Ibn al-Nadim. As they were cut off from the Mesopotamian communities, the Manicheans in Central Asia by and by constituted their own community, which was called the *Dinavariyya* by the Arabs.⁶⁴ No remains have been found in this area, however.

We see that the spread of Manicheism along the northern Silk Route *could* have begun as early as the 4th century, when Sogdian presence at Dunhuang shows that the possibility of migration must have existed by then. This period introduces a time of struggle and war on China and Chinese Turkestan, and the sources have little to say about it until the beginning of the 7th century. From ab. 600 we have a Chinese report about old Iranian religion (Zoroastrianism) in Sogdiana. Then, in 632, the Nestorians were allowed to practice their faith in China, and, finally, betw. 650-683 a Manichean teacher (Sogd. *mozhak*) arrived at the Chinese court under the emperor Gaozong. After the first Tibetan occupation in 670-692, we then have the report about a Manichean missionary (*judodan* = Sogd. *aftadan*, from Pers. *haftadan* "the Seventy") coming to the court of Empress Wu in 694, bringing a copy of the *Book of the Two Principles* (*Er zung jing*).

There are several reasons why the Manicheans may have left Sogdiana. The idealistic reason is its missionary nature. More practical reasons may be found in the political upheavals that took place in Sogdiana throughout the 4th and 5th centuries, when the country was occupied by successive conquerors ("Huns," Chionites, Hephthalites).

In fact, efforts by the Sogdian state clergy in the 6th cent. to rehabilitate the old Sogdian religion (Zoroastrianism), like the Sasanian persecutions in the 3rd century, coupled with safer conditions along the Silk Route, may have provided a strong impetus for the Manicheans to move eastward. The arrival of the Manichean teachers at the court in the late 7th cent. may represent the final thrust of such a movement.

A more or equally strong pressure on the Manicheans to leave must have resulted from the Muslim conquest of Sogdiana in 705-715, although, apparently, the Muslims did not crack down on the indigenous religions then.

After this, we have other reports of Manicheans in China. In 719 a Manichean teacher (Sogd. *mozhak*) from Tokharistan came to the court, and in 731/2 the emperor commissioned a summary of Manichean doctrines in Chinese (the *Compendium*), which, however, resulted in **the imperial edict against Manicheism of 732**, whereby Manicheism was ousted from Chang'an, but not Loyang:

The doctrine of Mar Mani is basically a perverse belief and fraudulently assumes to be a school of Buddhism and will therefore **mislead the masses**. It deserves to be strictly prohibited. However, since it is the indigenous religion of the Western Barbarians (xi-hu) and other foreigners, its followers will not be punished if they practise it among themselves.⁶⁵

The religion received its strongest support along the Silk Road in 762/3, when the Uigur Böğü-qaghan converted to Manicheism, an event recorded in the famous Karabalgasun inscription. The qaghan had been approached by the Chinese to help in the rebellion of An Lushan in 755-63 and found himself in Loyang, where there was already a Manichean community.⁶⁶ This resulted in the establishment of Manichean communities and the building of temples in cities throughout China, and it is likely that the spread of Manicheans from Sogdiana become more organized.

So we see that the spread of Manicheism through Chinese Turkestan was completed by the end of the 7th century. This does not mean, however, that a Manichean community was already well established at Turfan. In fact, the church province was called the Province of the East, of the Four Tugristans, where Tugristan presumably means "land of the Tokharians."⁶⁷

As for Iranian presence at Turfan, it seems clear that there were Sogdian communities at Turfan, both

⁶⁴ See Colditz, 1992.

⁶⁵ Lieu, 1985, p. 190.

⁶⁶ See Sundermann, 2001, pp. 159-60; a different interpretation of the sources in Clark, 2000, see Sundermann's remarks, *ibid*.

⁶⁷ The Tokharians were an Indo-European people, different from the Iranians, who settled in Central Asia and Xianjiang in prehistoric times (at least before the common era). Texts in Tokharian language have been found on the northern Silk Route in the areas of Kucha and Agni/Qarashahr. There are a few fragments of bilingual Manichean texts in Tokharian and Uigur (old Turkish).

Manichean and Christian, from the evidence of the amount of Sogdian texts found there. Of special interest are two letters in the Berlin Turfan collection, both in Sogdian language, which contain interesting information. They were described by Henning in 1936, but were not published till in 1983 by Sundermann. Henning already said the essential about them. He saw that the letters were complaints from a Manichean community in Sogdiana to a Manichean bishop residing in Qocho about modern practices and standards in their own communities, apparently originating in Mesopotamia. Fortunately, the letters mention the two opposing factions involved, namely the Mihriyan's and the Miklasik's, and these groupings were in fact registered by the Muslim encyclopedist Ibn Nadim in his famous book about religions, the *Fihrist*. According to Ibn al-Nadim, Mihr was the head of the church from 710 to 740, under whom there was a schism. The two resulting factions were the Mihriyya and the Miklasiyya. Ibn al-Nadim also informs us that the groups lasted till about 880. Henning therefore tentatively set the date of the letters between 763 and 840. Sundermann, however, points out that the letters show no trace of Turkic influence and instead sets the date before the conquest of the western Uigur steppe empire in 840 by the Kirgiz, causing the fall of Karabalgasun and the flight of some Uigurs eastward, and finally to Qocho. This then gives us a *terminus ante quem* for the Sogdian presence in Turfan from the texts. Whether archeology and art history can provide earlier dates is for others to say.

Around 1000 C.E., many Manichean temples were converted into Buddhist temples. We can see this from caves at Bezeklik that contain Manichean wall paintings behind new walls with Buddhist motifs, and there are texts that talk about the destruction of Manichean monasteries.

Middle Persian and Parthian manuscripts by themselves do not prove the existence of native Persians or Parthians at Turfan, as they may have been--and probably were--copied for religious reasons as the records of the earliest church. To determine whether there were native Persians or Parthians--whether descendants of the early immigrants or just late immigrants-- at Turfan, we must therefore look for other evidence. Such evidence may be provided by the personal names from Turfan. These have been studied by Sundermann, who analyzed the names of Manicheans in Turfan manuscripts from the 8th to 11th centuries. Among these names there are several that are Persian and Parthian, as opposed to Sogdian. Additional evidence may be seen in the fact that some of the Middle Persian manuscripts exhibit late linguistic features, which might seem to indicate that there were Persians there who spoke a later variety of Middle Persian than that in which the original texts were composed, but here again the evidence is actually inconclusive, since these can be copies of manuscripts imported in the late Sasanian period.

Thus, although the possibility exists that here were Persians (and possibly Parthians) at Turfan at some time, the answer to these questions must probably be provided by the archeologists and the art historians. Note especially that there are wall paintings from Turfan showing 16 elects who are explicitly identified by Middle Persian names. If these elects can also be shown to differ physically from the Sogdians, then we might have a proof that there were Persians at Turfan.

Small communities endured in China until around 1600.⁶⁸ The only place it survived till this day is in a small community on the southern coast of China, which still worships Mani, but how much of the original teachings survives, is not known yet.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Lieu, 1985, pp. 259-264.

⁶⁹ From: peter bryder <Peter.Bryder@teol.lu.se>: There is a Manichaean temple outside Quanzhou called Cao'an. Its history is the last we know of Manicheism in China. Please see: P. Bryder "...where the faint traces of Manicheism disappear" in *Altorientalische Forschungen*, vol 14, p.201-208, 1988. P

From: "Haar, B. ter" <B.ter.Haar@let.leidenuniv.nl>; The term Manichaean is used in such vague ways, that it functions more like a label than a real technical term. This is true for Europe, but even more so in China. I deal with these matters in my own work on the White Lotus Teachings as a label. The basis for the claim that there is a case traditionally made for Manichaean influence on whatever the White Lotus tradition or teachings is, is that the Maitreyan late Yuan uprising of Han Shantong and his son Han Lin'er involved the belief in the advent of a Luminous King (*mingwang*). Now, it is 99,99 % certain that the Manichaeans did not use this term, but rather Luminous Worthy or Worthy of Light (*mingzun*) or a related term. More to the point still, the *mingwang* can be traced to old indigenous messianic traditions from at least the very early Sui and Tang (most likely even older) predating the advent of Manichaeism to China during the late Tang. In an unpublished article, I actually trace the figure to one specific tradition, of the Five Kings (or Five Bodhisattvas) that goes back at least to the mid-Tang period. Other elements from this very specific oral messianic tradition also pop up in the context of the late Yuan uprisings, including the choice of the specific year in which they rebelled (not a *jiazi* year).

THE SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND OF MANI AND MANICHEISM

Mani's domestic background was twofold: Both his parents had Iranian ancestry, though his father was converted by a Baptist sect of an heretical Christian nature. This mixed background closely reflects the cultural ambiance of Mesopotamia of those days, which was penetrated by strong but diverse religious currents. The ancient Iranian religion was that of the Arsacid rulers; numerous Near Eastern religions, such as Judaism, various Christian and especially Gnostic movements, were vying for followers; and, finally, from the east, came a small but unmistakable trickle of oriental religions: Hinduism and Buddhism, called Bramans and Shamans in Iran, listed by Kerdîr in his inscriptions as religions that he persecuted and expelled from Iran.⁷⁰

In the Baptist milieu he grew up in Mani must have become acquainted with the books New Testament, in particular the four gospels in the harmonized form of the Diatesseron of Tatian, and the writings of Paul.⁷¹ He also read the Revelations of the founder of the sect, Elchasai, as well as the various revelations current in Mesopotamia Judeo-Christianity at the time: the apocalypses of Adam, Seth, Enoch, and Noah.⁷² He was particularly fascinated by the Gospel and Acts of Thomas, the brother of Jesus, to whom he was said to have confided his innermost thoughts and to have sent to the far east to preach the Gospel. He was probably also familiar with the teachings of Bardesanes, who developed his own cosmological myth and scheme of salvation some years before Mani but of whose teachings very little remains.

Lists of these prophets are extant both in Manichean writings and in later writings about Manicheism, for instance, in Biruni's Arabic works. These texts show that Mani counted among his predecessors several figures from the Old Testament, Zarathustra, the Buddha, and Jesus, the founders of four of the most important religions current throughout the Near East in Mani's time: Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Christianity.

But why did these religions, according to Mani, not endure? The main reason was that they were slandered by calumniators and were corrupted. Thus, not only did each prophet have his own calumniator, but each religion had its own destroyers. These calumniators and destroyers were nothing but tools of the devil and the powers of evil, who were violently opposed to the revelation of truth.

Obviously Mani took these names from various traditions and legends current in his time. As far as the defamation of the Buddha is concerned, the details were probably added only later, in central Asia, after the Manicheans had become more familiar with Buddhist legends. Even in the case of Zarathustra, the western sources, the Coptic and Parthian texts, do not mention Zamasp, though the Coptic text mentions Wishtasp (Hystaspes), Zarathustra's royal patron. Such use of tales and parables was typical of the missionary activities of Mani and his followers.

The ten points of superiority of Mani's religion

We may ask, what was the reason for this religion to be at the same time popular and so detested and maybe feared, both in the east and the west, for hundreds of years?

The best way to understand the special nature of Mani's religion is to consider for a moment Mani's own view of his religion in relation to the other religions of his time. A special characteristic of Mani's religion was that it did not dismiss other religions as false religions, instead Mani accepted earlier religions and their prophets as carriers of the truth. For, according to Mani, his new religion was not simply to replace the previous religions, rather it represented the fulfillment of what the previous religions had promised but not been able to live up to. It was the same truth that had been revealed to the earlier prophets and was embedded in their religions, but, for various reasons, this truth had degenerated. We know from his own writings that the problem with the earlier religions was rather that they did not have inherent power enough to withstand the attacks of evil and so they degenerated, and the truth they contained was spoiled.

In a list of ten points Mani explains how his religion distinguishes itself above the others. Two versions of the list are preserved, one Middle Persian⁷³ and one Coptic;⁷⁴ unfortunately both contain only the first five points,

⁷⁰ Inscription of Kerdîr, KKZ 9-10.

⁷¹ See Tardieu, pp. 41f.

⁷² See Reeves, *Heralds of that Good Realm*, 1996

⁷³ Henning in *Mir. Man.* ii; and in Boyce, *Reader*, text a.

which are as follows:

1. The previous religions were only in one land and in one language, but Mani's was taught in all lands and in all languages.

2. The previous religions endured only as long as there were pure leaders in them. When the leaders left, the religions were confused, but Mani's religion was well organized, with a clerical hierarchy, and would endure to the end of the world.

3. The souls "whose deeds were not accomplished" in their own religion would come to Mani's and obtain deliverance.

4. Mani's revelation of the two principles and his living scriptures, his wisdom and knowledge were better than those of the previous religions. Thus the earlier apostles did not write down their teachings as Mani did.

This is elaborated in the introduction to the *Kephalaia*: Jesus came to the West, and after his death his disciples wrote down his words. Zarathustra came to the land of Persia to King Hystaspes (Persian Wishtasp), but he did not write books, though his disciples remembered and wrote down his words after his death. And finally, when the Buddha came, he preached much wisdom and established churches, but he did not write anything, and it was his disciples who remembered and wrote down his words after his death.⁷⁵

5. The writings and the wisdom and the apocalypses and the parables and the psalms of all earlier churches (religions) were gathered everywhere and came to Mani's church and were added to the wisdom which he revealed. And the *Kephalaia* adds, "As water will be added to water and becomes much water, so were the ancient (earlier) books added to my writings and became a great wisdom the like of which was not proclaimed (hitherto) in all ancient (earlier) generations."⁷⁶

This is what made Manicheism special. Though Mani did believe, of course, that his religion was the final truth, yet he also believed that the other religions contained this truth, if only fragmentarily. This means that Mani to a certain extent identified the other religions with his own religion and at least did not dismiss them off-hand as untruth, and he also deliberately took elements from other religions and incorporated them into his own great scheme of the world and mankind.

⁷⁴ *Kephalaia*, chap. 154.

⁷⁵ *Kephalaia*, chap. 1.

⁷⁶ *Kephalaia*, chap. 154; cf. Böhlig, 1988.

MANI'S BOOKS

By profession Mani seems to have been a painter, an art he was extremely proficient. As a matter of fact his only claim to fame in the literature of Islamic Iran was that he was a painter and had painted the wonderful picture book the *Arzhang*, which became for the poets a model of beauty. He inspired the taste for beautiful books in his followers, and the art of illuminated manuscripts and books was the invention of the central Asian Manicheans.

He also created a new alphabet for his writings from the Syriac Estrangelo alphabet with the addition of a few letters and diacritical marks necessary to express specifically Iranian sounds not found in Syriac. This alphabet was then used for all writings in Iranian languages: Persian, Parthian, Sogdian, and Bactrian, and by extension also for Turkish. He thus avoided the official script and orthography of the Sasanian empire, which labored under the constrictions of historical and pseudo-historical spelling, the use of Aramaic heterograms and phonetic complements, and the ambiguity of a few of the letters.

Mani wrote all his books in his native language, Aramaic, except one, the *Shabuhragân*, which he wrote in Persian. Large parts of the original *Shabuhragân* have been preserved, but none of his Aramaic writings. These are known only from translations, principally in Iranian languages, Turkish, and Coptic, but also from quotations in Augustine's writings and elsewhere.

Lists of the canon are preserved in several texts: the Coptic *Kephalaia*, *Homilies*, and *Psalms*, the Chinese *Compendium*, and in Ibn al-Nadim's *Fihrist*.

The canonical books

The canonical books in the somewhat varying order of the Manichean tradition are the following:

1. *The Living Gospel*. According to Biruni this work was in 22 chapters, each chapter beginning with a letter from the Syriac alphabet, from alaf to taw. Numerous fragments of this book, which was the "Little Red Book" of the Manichean missionaries, have been identified in the *Codex* and among the Iranian texts. Biruni tells us that he had a copy in his library and that in this book Mani announced that he was the Paraclete announced by Christ and the Seal of the Prophets.
2. *The Treasure of the Living*. One fragment is found in Biruni's *India*, and two in Augustine's writings. It appears to have contained a systematic theology and defense of the new religion.
3. *The Book of Mysteries*. This book contained 18 chapters, all briefly listed in the *Fihrist*. Among other things this book contained a discussion and refutation of the doctrines of Bardesanes.
4. A book of Legends (*Pragmateia*). The cosmological citations in Theodore bar Konai's *Scholies* may be from this book.⁷⁷
5. *The Book of the Giants* (Persian *Kawan*). Several books were composed around the theme of the Old Testament *nefilim* mentioned in Genesis 6:4, one of them was the *Apocalypse of Enoch* known from a complete Ethiopian version and many fragments in Greek, another was a Jewish book, fragments of which were discovered at Qumran. It was the Jewish version that served as model for Mani's book on the giants, of which there are fragments in Persian and Sogdian.
6. *Letters*. This was a collection of Mani's letters, written to various Manichean communities in response to problems of practices. The collection was included among the Coptic manuscripts from Egypt but was lost during World War II.
7. The last of the canonical scriptures was a collection of psalms and prayers. Numerous hymns and prayers have been preserved, but it is not possible to verify whether Mani's "two psalms and (several) prayers" are among the extant ones.

Non-canonical books

Not included in the canon were the following two books:

The *Shabuhragân*. This was written and dedicated to his first patron, King Shapur I, who gave him permission to work in Iran. The book apparently contained a complete exposition of his religious system: a prophetology and the coming of Mani,⁷⁸ his cosmology,⁷⁹ and his eschatology.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Tardieu, p. 56.

⁷⁸ Sundermann, BT 11, 91f., 94-98; *Kephalaia* 1; Bīrūnī.

The *Picture Book* (*Ardahang*, *Arzhang*). This was a book containing illustrations to accompany and facilitate the understanding of Mani's cosmology.

The followers of Mani soon began making compilations of the doctrines of the master. One of these is the *Kephalaia* "chapters" known from two Coptic recensions and perhaps from Persian fragments. Two others are the Coptic *Homilies* and *Hymns*.

Among Iranian texts are: two hymn cycles, the *Huyadag-man* and the *Angad roshnan*, originally written in Parthian, but also translated into Sogdian, Turkish, and Chinese; *The Sermon on the Light-Nous* and *The Sermon on the Soul*.

The Chinese Manicheans made their own compilations, two of which have survived, the so-called *Traité* and the *Compendium of doctrines*.

A number of confession texts have survived, among them several Iranian ones and the famous Khwastwanift, a lost Parthian text preserved in Turkish translation.

⁷⁹ Hutter, 1992.

⁸⁰ MacKenzie, 1979-80; *Homilies* 2.

THE MANICHEAN MYTH

Mani's problem was, like that of many other founders of religions, given a good god, how to explain the existence of evil (*unde malum*). In Judeo-Christian tradition, evil originated through sin committed by the first two humans. The efforts of later theologians went into finding an explanation for the fact that God did not prevent this from happening. One solution to the problem proposed in the various Gnostic schools current in the Middle East in the first centuries of our era was to postulate a deterioration that proceeded from the level of the state of grace, via a level containing a creator god, down to the present level. The problem involved here was to account for the start of this deterioration.

Mani, however, found a solution to the problem in a different place. In the religion of Iran, the problem of evil had been "solved" by postulating two separate principles both existing from eternity, although not for eternity. Evil came into the world when the forces of evil or darkness perceived the realm of goodness or light and wanted to possess and destroy it. The lord of the realm of light was aware that the power of darkness could only be overcome in battle, and allowed it to break through the barrier separating the two realms, but created the visible world as battle field. At the end of a given period the forces of evil would be overcome and the world return to its original state.

When the myth starts, we are presented with the existence of two primeval principles existing from eternity but separated by a common border: Light vs. Darkness, good vs. evil, life vs. death, intelligence vs. stupidity, beauty vs. ugliness, peace, calm, and order vs. war, disturbance, and chaos, etc., opposed and contrary to one another in every way.

Originally the two are in a stage of equilibrium with the Realm of Light in the north and the Realm of Darkness in the south. The Realm of Light, however is in constant expansion in three directions: north, east, and west, while the Realm of Darkness can only expand toward the south. Thus it finds itself squeezed between the eastern and western expansions of the Realm of Light, like a wedge (Aug., *contra Faustum* 4.2).

In the course of its chaotic existence the King of the Realm of Darkness and its inhabitants are brought close to the Border and see the Realm of Light. Having become aware of the Light they want to possess and devour it. They ready an attack. At that moment the 5 greatnesses trembled in concern for themselves.

In order to avoid this the Father of Greatness devises a plan to get rid of the Darkness once and for all. Ruling out the possibility of using his Aeons, which were not intended for war, he decides to go himself (= by his Self). For this purpose he begins a series of evocations or emanations. The first of these is the MOTHER OF LIFE/MOTHER OF THE LIVING, who in turn evokes the FIRST MAN. The First Man evokes HIS FIVE SONS, his SOUL.

The First Man dons his 5 sons as ARMOR and is sent down to do battle with the powers of Darkness. An angel (Syriac Nahashbat) goes before him holding the crown of victory.

As he goes down an angel lights up his road, displaying the crown of victory, and when the king of darkness sees him he says to himself, "that which I sought far away, I have found close by!"

The First Man and his 5 sons are attacked and OVERCOME and stunned, rendered UNCONSCIOUS, by the sons of Darkness.

The sons of the First Man are DEVoured/CONSUMED by the sons of Darkness, but will affect them like DEADLY POISON.

The sons themselves are rendered completely DISTRACTED by the poison inherent in the sons of Darkness, like a man bitten by a mad dog or a poisonous snake.

The swallowing of the sons initiates the period of MIXTURE, that is of the Light in the Darkness or MATTER (Gk. Hyle, Pers. AŪz). This is exactly the PLAN, or scheme, of the Father, however, who is using the sons as BAIT for the Darkness. By offering himself and his sons to them as a bait or poison, just as a man might mix poison in a cake and give to an enemy, the darkness would ultimately be defeated.⁸¹

⁸¹ Bar Konai in Jackson, 226.

This is thus the beginning of the long and painful imprisonment of Light in Matter and the reason for the subsequent cosmic development, the creation of the world and mankind and the liberation of the imprisoned Light, which is the salvation of man.

Then the rescuing action is set in motion. When the First man comes to, he calls up to his Father seven times. The Father of Greatness then evokes the FRIEND OF THE LIGHTS, who evokes the GREAT BUILDER, who evokes the LIVING SPIRIT, who evokes HIS FIVE SONS.

The Living Spirit and his sons ready themselves for the rescue, and the Living Spirit calls out with a mighty voice a call, which becomes the prototype of the call for salvation (Puech). The CALL cuts open the darkness like a sword, revealing the shape of the First Man. The First Man answers, and his ANSWER together with the CALL ascend to the Living Spirit, who dons the Call, and the Mother of Life, who dons the Answer, her dear son.

The two of them next descend into the Darkness. The Living Spirit extends his RIGHT HAND to the First Man and pulls him out. This becomes a ritual and symbolic gesture among the Manicheans. The Mother EMBRACES and KISSES him, and all three ascend in triumph up to the Light Earth, returning the First Man to his proper HOMELAND. The First Man is thus the prototype of the first martyr as well as the first being to be saved (Puech) from within the Darkness and returned to Paradise.

The Living Spirit punishes the Powers of Darkness (*Kephalaia*, chap. 16).

TWO PRINCIPLES

Light vs. Darkness, good vs. evil, life vs. death, intelligence vs. stupidity, beauty vs. ugliness, peace, calm, and order vs. war, disturbance, and chaos, etc.,

REALM OF LIGHT

FIVE DWELLINGS = MEMBERS OF GOD:

INTELLIGENCE

KNOWLEDGE

THOUGHT

REFLECTION

CONSCIENCE

FIVE GREATNESSES:

- | |
|---|
| <p>1. FATHER OF GREATNESS
enthroned with 12 diadems of light in</p> <p>2. THE LIGHT EARTH
surrounded by</p> <p>3. THE LIGHT ETHER</p> |
|---|

The Father is surrounded by

4. THE 12 AEONS
sons of the father and

5. THE AEONS OF AEONS
dwelling of the light gods, angels, elements, and powers

— — — — — **B O R D E R** — — — — —

REALM OF DARKNESS

FIVE ABYSSES

ruled by five Archonts

SMOKE

FIRE

WIND

WATER

DARKNESS

KING OF DARKNESS

The sons of Darkness, demons, etc.

BEGINNING: THE AWARENESS AND THE FIRST ATTACK

1ST CREATION: THE SACRIFICE AND THE VICTIM

FATHER → GREAT SPIRIT/MOTHER OF LIFE (FROM THE FATHER'S INSIGHT)
MOTHER OF LIFE → FIRST MAN
FIRST MAN → 5 SONS (LIGHT ELEMENTS):
= FIVE GODS

1. LIGHT
2. WIND
3. WATER
4. FIRE
5. AIR

THE OFFENSIVE: SACRIFICE OF THE FIRST MAN AND HIS FIVE SONS

The sons of the First Man, henceforth IMPRISONED in Darkness, are what is later referred to as the LIVING SOUL, that is, the Light imprisoned in matter (to be created out of Darkness), which will need to be saved/redeemed.

RESCUE OF THE FIRST MAN.

* * *

2ND CREATION: THE BUILDERS

FATHER → FRIEND OF THE LIGHTS (FROM THE FATHER'S THOUGHT)
FRIEND OF THE LIGHTS → THE GREAT BUILDER
THE GREAT BUILDER → THE LIVING SPIRIT (THE DEMIURGE)
THE LIVING SPIRIT → 5 SONS:

1. KEEPER OF SPLENDOR (SPLENDITENENS)
2. KING OF HONOR (REX HONORIS)
3. LIGHT ADAMAS
4. GLORIOUS KING (REX GLORIOSUS)
5. THE CARRIER GOD (ATLAS)

RESCUE OF THE IMPRISONED LIGHT: CREATION OF THE COSMOS.

Having rescued the First Man, a scheme had to be invented to extract the five sons of the First Man, his Soul, who, having been abandoned by their Father, are now actually in the bowels of the Darkness. The plan consists in creating the world to serve as an enormous mechanism of salvation, making it into an enormous still or water wheel, which will gradually extract all the Light from Matter and return it to and reunite it with its ORIGIN. For this purpose the Living Spirit together with his five sons create, out of the forces of darkness, the world *and everything in it, including man*.

1. Heavens and earths.

According to Bar Konai the Living Spirit orders three of his sons—including, no doubt, Adamas, the warrior and dragon-slayer—to kill and flay the sons of Darkness, the ARCHONTS, and take them to the Mother of Life.

Then the Mother of Life arranges to have ten or eleven heavens made out of their hides. According to other sources some of the archonts were chained to the HEAVENS, which is why they are sometimes dark, although speckled with stars, which represent the particles of the original light that the archonts had swallowed up. This also explains the evil influences of the planets.

The three sons of the Living Spirit next throw their carcasses down onto the Dark Earth, making eight EARTHS. The bones become the mountains and their flesh and excrements become the earth.

The five sons of the Living Spirit are invested with individual cosmic functions:

The SPLENDITENENS holds up the five sons of the First Man by their reins, and below them the heavens were stretched out.

ATLAS stands on one knee supporting the earths.

The REX HONORIS is placed in the middle of heaven surveying everything.

2. Sun and moon and the cosmic wheels.

The Living Spirit shows his forms to the sons of Darkness, which makes them vomit part of the Light they have swallowed.

This Light the Living Spirit distills once and makes the sun and the moon from it. — Alternately, he makes the Light into three lots: that which has not suffered from the contact with the Darkness he makes into the sun and the moon, that which has suffered moderately from the contact with the Darkness he makes into the stars.

From the rest of the Light he makes the wheels of wind, water, and fire. All these objects he then fastens below, near Atlas.

The Rex Honoris evokes and settles orbits for them.

The Mother, the First Man, and the Living Spirit next get up and go before the Father and invoke him.

The Father hears them and evokes the third Creation.

3RD CREATION: THE REDEEMERS⁸²

FATHER →	THE THIRD MESSENGER (FROM THE FATHER'S INTELLIGENCE)
THE THIRD MESSENGER →	THE COLUMN OF GLORY/THE PERFECT MAN JESUS THE SPLENDOR (FROM THE FATHER'S COUNSEL) THE VIRGIN OF LIGHT (FROM THE FATHER'S CONSIDERATION) TWELVE VIRGINS (the zodiac)
JESUS THE SPLENDOR →	THE GREAT NOUS ⁸³ THE GREAT JUDGE THE YOUTH/BOY
THE GREAT NOUS →	THE APOSTLE OF LIGHT THE TWIN/COMPANION THE LIGHT FORM
THE LIGHT FORM +	THREE ANGLES: one holds the prize one carries the light garment has the diadem, wreath, and crown of light

The Third Messenger comes to the TWO SHIPS (sun and moon) and charges his servants to set them in motion.

The Great Builder makes a NEW EARTH and sets in motion the three wheels.

He also builds a PRISON for the powers of Darkness to be detained in at the end of the world.

SEDUCTION OF THE ARCHONTS.

As soon as the two ships reach the zenith, the Third Messenger reveals his male form as well as his female form = the Virgin of Light to the female and male archonts, respectively, who are caught up in a burning desire for him/her.

The male archonts begin releasing the Light they contain through their sperm.

The Third Messenger hides his forms and filters the Light from the sperm, which falls back down on the archonts, is rejected by them and falls down on the earth, half of it on the wet part and half on the dry part of the earth.⁸⁴

At this time, the transmigration of souls is started (*Kephalaia*, chap. 34).

THE SEA MONSTER.

That which falls down on the wet part becomes a giant monster in the image of the King of Darkness. Light Adamas is sent to battle it, overcomes it, and stretches it out in the north, from east to west.

PLANTS.

That which falls down on the dry part becomes five trees.

⁸² See *Kephalaia*, chap. 7, on the Five Fathers.

⁸³ See Sundermann, 1995.

⁸⁴ See also *Kephalaia*, chap. 55, on the greater purpose of the Third Messenger.

THE THRONES

There are nine thrones outside the world, for the Father, the Mother of Life, the First Man, the Friend of the Lights, the Great Builder, the Living Spirit, the Third Messenger, Jesus the splendor, the Great Nous.

There are nine thrones in the world:

Three in the sun for the Third Messenger, the Great Spirit (Mother of Life), and the Living Spirit.

Three in the moon for Jesus the Splendor, the First Man, the Virgin of Light.

One is in the seventh firmament for the King of Honor.

One in the atmosphere for the Judge.

One for the apostle of the church.

ANTHROPOLOGY

The daughters of Darkness, because of unbridled intercourse in the Realm of Darkness from eternity, were already pregnant, and after seeing the forms of the Third Messenger they abort their fetuses, which fall down upon the earth and start eating the shoots of the trees.

ASHAQLUN AND NEBROEL (NIMRAEL) AND THE BIRTH OF ADAM AND EVE.

The abortions remember the form they had seen and wonder where it went. Matter herself is worried after seeing the Third Messenger, that the Light may escape her and therefore makes a plan for retaining it more securely. She instructs ASHAQLUN, the son of the King of Darkness, to tell the abortions to bring him their sons and daughters(!), and he will make a figure of the same form. So they do, he eats the males and gives the females to his companion, NEBROEL. Then Ashaqlun and Nebroel have intercourse, and Nebroel becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son they called ADAM. Next she bears a daughter, which she calls EVE. **Adam is unconscious/lies in torpor, having forgotten where he came from and his own divine origin.**

RESCUE OF ADAM.

Since a large part of the Light is by now gathered in Adam, he becomes the first target of the second rescue mission. JESUS THE SPLENDOR wakes Adam and makes him start moving. He chases the male demon and chains the female.⁸⁵

Adam examines his Soul and **recognizes who he is**. Jesus the Splendor shows him the fathers in the height and how his Soul is at the mercy of wild animals and, mingled and imprisoned in all existence and chained to the stench of the Darkness.

Next Jesus the Splendor makes Adam stand up and makes him taste of the Tree of Life, after which Adam completely realizes his desperate and miserable condition.⁸⁶

Adam is thus not only the first human, but also the first human to be apprised of his true condition: he receives KNOWLEDGE (of the truth) = GNOSIS.

This first time it is Jesus the Splendor who imparts the knowledge. Later the agent in charge of this function is a divinity called the Great Nous (\approx redeeming cosmic intelligence), a hypostasis of Jesus the Splendor.

The human body (the microcosm) is in the image of the world (the macrocosm).⁸⁷

HUMAN HISTORY

The story of the world after Adam was presumably told in the *Pragmateia* and the *Book of Giants*, which contained what we would call the legendary history of the world, coinciding originally with the chapters of Genesis leading up to the FLOOD, but with later accretions from the legendary histories of the various traditions Mani and the Manicheans later came in contact with.

Human history, which started with the creation of Adam and Eve, continues with Adam's son Sethel and through the time of the Giants and Watchers to the Flood and beyond.

Scattered throughout human history are the PROPHETS to whom the Great Nous revealed KNOWLEDGE of the truth and who founded religions. These prophets, whom Mani regarded as his predecessors, appeared in the three major civilizations known to him: Near East, Iran, and India.

These religions did not endure because the prophets were slandered by calumniators and their religions were therefore corrupted and destroyed. Thus, not only did each prophet have his own calumniator, but each religion had

⁸⁵ Jesus does not come for the salvation of mankind alone, but for a greater cosmic purpose (*Kephalaia*, chp. 112).

⁸⁶ On Adam and Sethel, see Reeves, "*Manichaica Aramaica*?" 1999.

⁸⁷ See *Kephalaia*, chap. 70.

its own destroyers. These calumniators and destroyers were nothing but tools of the devil and the powers of evil, who were violently opposed to the revelation of truth.

Lists of prophets, their slanderers, and destroyers of religions are found in both Coptic and Iranian texts. In chapter one of the *Kephalaia* the prophets are listed as Sethel, son of Adam, Enoch, Sem, etc.,⁸⁸ the Buddha and the *Arhants (Buddhist saints) who came to the east, Zarathustra, who came to Persia, to King Hystaspes, and finally Jesus Christ, who came to the Jews.⁸⁹

In some of these lists only Zarathustra, the Buddha, and Jesus are mentioned. Thus in a Parthian text containing the questions of a boy and the answers of Jesus⁹⁰ we are told that Zarathustra came down to the land of Persia, exposed the truth and began saving souls but that Satan became aware of it, sent the demons of wrath against him, and the truth was distorted. After that the Buddha Shakyamuni for a while saved many souls in the land of India, however, his uncle Devadatta (Debat) became envious, and the Buddha went into nirvana. Then Jesus came down again [as another representative of the Great Nous/Jesus, who incorporates himself in the apostles and prophets], destroyed Jerusalem and the steeds of the demons of wrath, but Judas Iscariot poured the cup of poison and death over “the boy” (i.e., the imprisoned and suffering light soul).

A more detailed list of prophets and their calumniators is found in a Sogdian text.⁹¹ This list also begins at the beginning, quoting as the first calumniator Eve (Sogd. Martena) herself, who three times led Adam astray from the true religion; the first murderer was Cain, who killed his own brother. In the East the first evildoer was somebody whose name is unfortunately lost, but who spoilt the Brahmanic religion and established the ten adversities in the world. The second calumniator was Zamasp, who slandered Zarathustra (though, acc. to the Zoroastrian tradition Zamasp was Zarathustra’s successor and the one who wrote down his teachings); the second murderer was Alexander, who murdered the Magi; and the second evildoer was Kughune, son of the devil, who spoilt the Magian religion. The third calumniator was King Ashoka, who slandered the Buddha, and the third evildoer Devadatta (the Buddha’s uncle), who spoilt the Buddha’s religion. The fourth and last calumniator was Iscariot who slandered Christ, and the fourth evildoer Satan (Sogd. Satana, grammatically female gender) the evil who spoilt the Christian religion. In addition there were still other sinners whom the evil forces used as their steeds and who slandered the buddhas, the arhants, and all good people.

This tradition was again reported in the Islamic period by Biruni in his *Chronology*, where it is specified that the information was included at the beginning of the *Shabuhragân*. From this Biruni quotes as follows:

“Wisdom and deeds have always from time to time been brought to mankind by the messengers of god. So in one age they were brought by the messenger called Buddha, to India, in another by Zardusht to Persia, in another by Jesus to the West. Thereupon this revelation has come down, this prophecy in this last age through me, Mani, the messenger of the God of truth, to Babylonia.”

Mani further says in this book, according to Biruni, that he is the Paraclete announced by the Messiah, and that he is the seal of the prophets.⁹² This means that no further revelations and prophets were necessary, since Mani considered he had taken all precautions to ensure that his religion would not be corrupted and so would endure until the end of the world, as stated in his TEN POINTS OF SUPERIORITY.

ESCHATOLOGY

We must distinguish between the individual eschatology—what happens when a person dies—and the cosmic eschatology—what happens at the end of the world.

THE COSMOS AS A REFINERY

⁸⁸ See Reeves, *Heralds of that Good Realm*, 1996

⁸⁹ On Sethel-Zarathustra-Jesus, see J. Reeves, “Reconsidering the ‘Prophecy of Zardūšt’,” 1999.

⁹⁰ Henning, in Andreas, *Mir. Man.* iii, pp. 34-36; Boyce, *Reader*, pp. 171-73.

⁹¹ Henning, 1944, pp. 137-142.

⁹² Sachau, p. 190.

The Third Messenger takes up his dwelling in the sun, while Jesus the Splendor together with the Virgin of Light reside in the moon.

The three wheels of wind, water, and fire start turning like a big water wheel, detaching particles of Light from matter and conveying them up via the Column of Glory to the moon (15 days), where they are further refined and transferred to the sun (15 days), whence they are transferred to the Earth of Light.

The salvaged/refined/distilled Light will in the end be gathered into the Perfect Man/Last God/Last Statue and rise up to Paradise.⁹³

WHEN A MAN DIES

We have several descriptions of what happens when a man dies.⁹⁴

According to Ibn al-Nadim:

“When death comes to one of the Elect (Zaddiqa), Primal Man sends him a light shining deity in the form of the Wise Guide. With him are three deities, with whom there are the drinking vessel, clothing, head cloth, crown, and diadem of light. There accompanies them a virgin who resembles the soul of that member of the Elect” (tr. Dodge, II, p. 795).

Next, according to Ibn al-Nadim, a number of devils appear, but they are frightened away by the Wise, and the Elect mounts up to Paradise together with the three deities along the Column of Light.

In a Sogdian fragment⁹⁵ the soul of the righteous is first met by a number of girls who adorn him with flowers and place him on a golden litter, assuring him :

“fear not, righteous soul, but step forward to the Light Paradise and receive joy. For in this world you have abstained from slaughter, you felt compassion with the lives of all creatures so that you did not kill them nor eat of their flesh. Now step forward to the fragrant, wonderful Paradise, where there is eternal joy.”

After this his own action in the shape of a wondrous, divine princess, a virgin, comes before him and guides him on the way to Paradise.

A Manichean text containing related matter is the Parthian hymn M7⁹⁶ in which Zarhusht says to the Living Soul:

“If you wish I will instruct you from the witness of the primeval fathers (about) when Zarhusht, the righteous savior, conversed with his soul ... And it answered the harmless Sroshahraw (the Father of Greatness): ‘I, I am (your) tender child.’ ... Zarhusht greeted it: “Hail, O primeval Word, my limb!” ...”

Then, after a short break in the manuscript (I assume it is still Zarhusht who is talking):

“ ... every harmful external and internal sin, thought, spoken, and done. Learn the mixture (or “clinging” [cf. *kleça?*]) of the good and evil thought (*andēšišn* = *enthymesis*) and separate them from one another. Understand the pure speech of your own being, because it is itself the leader of the soul which is in the body. And by that lying speech understand fully who (it is that) leads to the dark hell, the hell-leader.”

REBIRTH

According to several sources the souls who are not saved the first time around must go back into material life until they are finally salvageable.

⁹³ See *Kephalaia*, chap. 48, on the “conduits”;

⁹⁴ Cf. Woschitz, 1989, pp. 130-34, Sundermann, 1992, for complete references.

⁹⁵ Henning, “Sogdian Tales,” 1945, pp. 476-77.

⁹⁶ Andreas-Henning, *Mir. Man.* iii, text g 82-107, 119-138; Boyce, 1975, texts av-az.

According to the Acta Archelai the soul must go through five different bodies before it is completely cleansed.

END OF THE WORLD.

The appearance of Mani and the propagation of his teaching mark the final stage in the battle against evil.

After a period of persecution, Manicheism will become prominent under the rule of a great king, and many souls will be saved. When everybody has received and accepted this teaching, the Great War will begin, initiating the Last Days, during which the Antichrist and false prophets will appear.

At the end of the war the church and the faith will have won, Jesus the Splendor will appear, and the last Judgment will begin, at which the sinners will be separated from the just.

THE LAST JUDGMENT.

The last Judgment is presided over by Jesus, the Judge. The account of it in the *Shabuhragân* closely follows that of Matt. 25:31-46. Here, at an early stage of Mani's career, there is no attempt to Iranize the concepts.

CONCLUSION

The First Man will reveal himself and call his sons back up to him. The five sons of the Living Spirit will abandon their thrones in the five spheres. All the warring gods will leave this world and ascend into the New Paradise (which the Great Builder had prepared for this occasion already in the beginning), where they will rest for a while, before they return to the Light Paradise and the Father of Greatness.

The earth will collapse (implode?), and a great fire will burn for 1,468 years, purifying the rest of the salvageable Light. This Light will assemble into the Perfect Man/Last God/Last Statue and rise up to Paradise.

The Darkness/Matter and its Desire together with the demons—the sexes having been segregated—as well as the damned souls(!), will be imprisoned in the Ball and hurled into a ditch, which is covered by an enormous stone.

The Father will reveal his face to the other light beings, who will enter into him (or into his treasure houses) and reappear in the original paradise or the new paradise, presided over by the First Man.

Thus the primordial equilibrium has been restored, but things have changed in the universe. The Darkness will no longer be able to threaten the Realm of Light, which henceforth will maintain eternally its peace and serenity. To obtain this result, however, the Light was forced to sacrifice a part of itself, namely that which had become so inextricably infiltrated in the Darkness and itself so sinful that it could no longer be saved.⁹⁷ This, however, does not worry the gods!

⁹⁷ Cf. *Kephalaia*, chap. 40.

THE COMMUNITY

⁹⁸The community is divided into elect and hearers.

The elect live in monasteries, wear white, and are financed by gifts and foundations. The monasteries have studies, prayer rooms, fasting rooms.

The hearers (male and female) lead “normal” lives. They are divided into groups led by an Elder.

The Hierarchy

- | | |
|--|--|
| 0. Leaders (<i>princeps</i>) | |
| 1. 12 Teachers (<i>magistri</i>), Apostles | guard the original teaching |
| 2. 72 Deans (<i>diaconi</i>), Bishops (<i>episcopi</i>) | supervise organizational matters |
| 3. 360 Elders (<i>presbyteri</i>), Pers. Housemaster | assist the bishops and run the community |
| 4. Elect (<i>electi</i>), Religious (<i>religiosi</i>), Perfect (<i>perfecti</i>),
Saints (<i>sancti</i>) | choir masters
preachers
scribes
cantors |
| 5. Hearers (<i>auditores</i>), Catechumens | |

All Manicheans have to follow the Five Commandments and the Three Seals.⁹⁹ Of these the Three Seals are that of the Mouth, Hands, and Heart.

The Three Seals

Seal of the Mouth (*signaculum oris*), cf. 4th Commandment.

Seal of the Hands (*signaculum manuum*, Copt. “peace of the hands”), cf. 2nd Commandment.

Seal of the Heart (*signaculum sinus*; Copt. “purity of virginity”), cf. 3rd Commandment.

The Five Commandments for the Elect

These are, according to a Sogdian and a Coptic text:

1st Commandment: Truth, not lying

2nd Commandment: non-violence, not killing

3rd Commandment: religious behavior, being pure (4th)

4th Commandment: purity of the mouth, not eating meat (3rd)

5th Commandment: blessed poverty

1st Commandment: Truth, not lying, that is, about the profession of the Manichean faith, being completely subordinated to the authority of the Church and at the service of the apostolic mission. The Elect are the receivers of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete revealed in Mani, Apostle of the Truth.

2nd Commandment: non-violence, not killing, that is, care not to hurt the Living Soul, which is mixed and imprisoned in matter, animal, vegetable, or mineral. The Living Soul, Crucified on Matter, in the image of the Light Cross and the Suffering Jesus (Jesus Patibilis). Whoever “harmed” anything, had to confess to sinning against the 2nd Commandment. Whatever harm one does to the Living Soul in any shape, in that shape one will be reborn (*Acta Arch.*). Hence agricultural work is prohibited for the Elect.

3rd Commandment: religious behavior, being pure (Copt. 4th), that is, complete chastity, celibacy, as well as refraining from in anyway providing pleasure for the body. It also prohibited encouraging or causing procreation in other things.

4th Commandment: purity of speech and purity of the mouth, not eating meat (Copt. 3rd), that is, all food from

⁹⁸ See Tardieu, Asmussen; BeDuhn, *The Manichaean Body*, 2000.

⁹⁹ BBB, M 801 MPers., Sogd.; M 14v Sogd., Copt. Hymn 235.

meat, as well as fermented (alcoholic) beverages (beer, wine, rice liquor) and milk products. In addition to strict vegetarianism the Elect and Hearers had to undergo severe fasts.

5th Commandment: blessed poverty, in accordance with Jesus's statement about the blessed poor, who shall inherit the realm of god. The Elect could own or acquire nothing themselves, except just enough nourishment to carry them through one day at a time and clothes for one year. This relieved the Elect of all daily tasks and allowed him to devote himself to preaching and praying.

Examples:

Bathing = sin against 2nd and 3rd Comm.

Planting a tree: against 2nd Comm.

FIVEFOLD CODE OF BEHAVIOR FOR THE HEARERS

1. The Ten Commandments

1st Commandment: rejection of false gods, as well as false opinions about God: that the Father of Greatness gave life and death and that the King of Darkness is a god.

2nd Commandment: purity of speech.

3rd Commandment: purity in culinary habits: no meat, alcohol.

4th Commandment: care not to say anything out of order or irreverential about the prophets.

5th Commandment: marital fidelity, sexual abstention on days of fasting.

6th Commandment: helping those who suffer and abstaining from greed.

7th Commandment: guarding against false prophets and impostors, that is, excommunicated Manicheans and renegades.

8th Commandment: guarding against hurting unnecessarily all beings. "His ten fingers must not make the Living Soul suffer."

9th Commandment: guarding against stealing and defrauding.

10th Commandment: abstaining from magic, the preparation of magic potions and other evil agents.

2. The prayer

Four daily prayers: when getting up at dawn, midday, sunset, fall of night.

Strict purification and ablution rules, correct recital of formulas, gestures and prostrations. During the day turned toward the sun, at night toward the moon. If sun and moon are invisible, then toward the north or the Polar star.

3. Almsgiving

The hearer should give a tenth or seventh of his goods to cleanse himself of the acts of the world, which, on the other hand, allow the Elect to concentrate on their own duties. Most often he gives bread, fruits, vegetables, clothes, and sandals. Rich hearers could help financially by buying back slaves, helping out brothers in need, building and upkeep of monasteries, and miscellaneous foundations. Almsgiving is crucial for the elect to be able to practice poverty.

These activities appear to be central to the way the Manichean community worked.¹⁰⁰ The Elect's bodies served as the place for liberating the Living Soul present in all matter. They could not themselves provide themselves with the foodstuffs, however, and needed the Hearers to do this for them. This in turn forced the Hearers to sin by harming the Living Soul in matter, but by presenting the produce to the Elect, their sins would be forgiven.

4. Fasting

Weekly, annual. The weekly fast was on Sunday, when no sexual activity was permitted, nor any other secular activity. Thus, on Sunday the hearer is like the elect. Of course, many hearers had to break the fast, especially in order to look after the animals.

The annual fast lasted 30 days, preceded by smaller festive fasts and culminating in the celebration of the Bema. Yimki fasts: seven two-day fasts.¹⁰¹

5. Confession of sins

Weekly, annual. The weekly confession took place on Monday and was attended by both elect and hearers. The hearer would kneel before his religious brother and ask forgiveness for all sin in thought, speech, acts.

The annual confession was collective and took place at the end of the 30-day fast. This permitted the hearer to attend the celebration of the Bema with the heart of a new-born child.

The confession is directed at the Great Nous, who forgives (*Keph.* 138).

THE LITURGY AND THE BEMA

The genuinely Manichean holidays corresponded to the dates of the life of Mani: birth, call by the angel, prophetic mission, passion and death, and martyrdoms of the first apostles.

Each celebration had three aspects: it commemorated the historical event, it realized the communion of the faithful through the confession of and pardon for sins and the chanting of hymns, and it announced the triumph of the true religion at the final judgment, which also corresponded to the Three Moments of the universal time.

The Bema¹⁰² was originally, in the Syriac Christian churches a seat placed in the middle of the nave on which the bishop would preside and from which the Gospel would be read.

In the Manichean places of worship, the throne was a five-stepped altar, covered by precious cloths, symbolizing the five classes of the hierarchy. The top of the Bema was always empty, as it was the seat of Mani.

The Bema was celebrated at the vernal equinox, was preceded by fasts,¹⁰³ and symbolized the passion of Mani, thus it was strictly parallel to the Christian Easter. The latter held no meaning for the Manicheans, to whom the crucified Christ was a phantom appearance only.

The calendar for the preceding fasting was the old Babylonian calendar and was described as follows by Ibn al-

¹⁰⁰ See BeDuhn, *The Manichaean Body*, 2000.

¹⁰¹ See Henning, "The Manichæan Fasts," 1945.

¹⁰² See Sundermann, "Bēma," in *Enc. Ir.*

¹⁰³ See Choksy, "Fasting," in *Enc. Ir.*

Nadim in his *Fihrist*.¹⁰⁴

2 days: 14-15 Nov.	sun in Sagittarius	full moon
2 days: 1-2 Jan.		New Light (new moon)
2 days: 14-15 Jan.	sun in Capricorn	full moon
30 days: 8 Feb.-8 March	sun in Aquarius	New Light

The celebration of the Bema probably went like this:

Preparatory:

Chanting of Bema hymns during the night preceding the celebrations

Opening of the doors to admit the first rays of the sun and hymns to dawn and Mani as the rising sun

The hearers bring fruits and cakes which are deposited on a table in front of the Bema throne, as well as rose petals, and fruit juices

Ceremony:

Commemoration of the Crucifixion

Prayers for support and praise of Mani

Readings from the Living Gospel

The penitential ritual: confession of sins, three hymns to Mani, prayer for absolution

Reading of the Seal Letter, Mani's last message

Chanting of the "Holy, holy!"

Holy communion in the form of a banquet offered to the elect by the hearers, containing particularly beautiful fruits

Chanting of hymns of thanks

¹⁰⁴ See Henning, "The Manichæan Fasts," 1945.

BUDDHIST TERMINOLOGY IN MANICHEISM

It is well known that the Manichean texts from central Asia contain a large number of Iranian technical terms and names of deities. The farther we come from Persia, linguistically speaking, the more common also is Buddhist terminology. We see it incipiently in Parthian texts, to a greater extent in Sogdian texts,¹⁰⁵ then still more in Old Turkish,¹⁰⁶ and lastly in the Manichean texts and doctrine in Chinese.¹⁰⁷ To give you an idea of how these terms were incorporated, let me quote some passages from Parthian texts:

One Manichean Parthian text contains fragments of a long parable concerning nagas.¹⁰⁸ After the characters of the parable have been identified with Mani, Mar Ammo, and the evil Spirit, the text continues: “And I have spoken these words for this reason, that whoever reads or listens to them, he should believe them and keep them in his head and abide by good deeds and so be released from the cycle of birth and death and from all evil; because through these pure precepts and through this pure wisdom I, Mani, and you, Mar Ammo, etc., will be released from the cycle of birth and death. For in this cycle of birth and death there is nothing more beautiful than merit and good deeds. ... Those who have followed me, Mar Mani, and who set their hopes in the god Ohrmazd, .. those are the ones who will be released and find release from this cycle of birth and death and will obtain eternal release.”

With the Manichean identification of the characters of this fable we can compare the common corresponding Buddhist triad Shakyamuni, Ananda, and Mara. The exhortation recalls the similar Buddhist one that whoever, reads, writes, or teaches the contents of the text in question (distantly recalling similar passages in the Old Persian and Sasanian inscriptions) will obtain a large heap of merit. The word for “release” is *mōxš*, a loan-word from Indian *moksā*. The “precepts” are *axšāpad*, a loan-word from Indian *śikṣāpada*. “Merit and good deeds” is *pun ud kirbag kirdagān*, a happy conjunction of Indian and Iranian terms.

Finally, in a liturgical text connected with the Bema ceremonies we read: “When you, Lord (i.e. Mani), go (i.e. leave this world), then release us too from the cycle of birth and death. (When) you go, Mani, release me, oh Maitreya, oh commander.”¹⁰⁹

Here we note the juxtaposition and identification of Mani as savior with Maitreya, the future savior Buddha. This is also in keeping with Mani’s teaching, since he saw himself not only as the successor of the previous prophets, Zarathustra, the Buddha, and Jesus, but also as the incarnation of the savior, that is both, at first, as Jesus the savior, and then, later, as the Buddha Maitreya, the savior. It is even possible that Mani, when he had his interview with the king of Turan, presented himself as the Maitreya.¹¹⁰

The Buddhist influence in Manicheism can be roughly seen in three areas:¹¹¹ 1. borrowing of Buddhist doctrinal terminology, 2. Buddhist imagery in Manichean art, and 3. borrowing of Buddhist narrative material. In a Sogdian parable book¹¹² the religion is compared with the world sea, which differs from other waters in ten points, a borrowing from Buddhist literature, as Sundermann has let me know. It also contains some very specifically Manichean material, however, such as the comparison of the world ocean’s being in ten points different from other waters with the ten points in which Mani’s religion was more excellent than the earlier ones (see above). Thus, like smaller waters, which are only in single places, the earlier religions were also only in single places; Mani’s religion is like the world ocean, which is seen in the whole world and in every place. Another comparison is made between the far shore of the world ocean, which in Buddhism stands for the other shore of the ocean of *samsara* (rebirths), which must be traversed to reach *nirvana*, and Mani’s sweet-smelling wonderful Paradise, known only by the chosen few.

¹⁰⁵ See Sims-Williams, “Indian elements in Parthian and Sogdian,” 1983.

¹⁰⁶ See van Tongerloo on Buddhist terms in Turkish Manichean texts.

¹⁰⁷ See Bryder’s study of the terminology of Chinese Manichean texts.

¹⁰⁸ Andreas, *Mir. Man.* iii, p. 11 [856]. 43

¹⁰⁹ Henning, *Ein manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch*, 1936, p. 45.

¹¹⁰ Sundermann, 1986, p. 13.

¹¹¹ According to Klimkeit, who has devoted several studies to this question. His research is most conveniently summarized in Klimkeit, “Buddhistische Übernahmen im iranischen und türkischen Manichäismus,” 1987.

¹¹² Sundermann, *BT* 15, 1985.

GNOSTIC SYSTEMS

Sources:

- Christian, anti-heretical authors.
- Writings of Gnostic communities.

Principal Gnostic systems:

Syrian-Egyptian-type:

- Basilides (2nd cent.)
- Marcion (2nd cent.)
- Valentinus (2nd cent.)
- Variety of Gnostic texts from Nag Hammadi that can not be referred to the teaching of any known Gnostic.
- Later movements.

Iranian-type:

- (Hymn of the Pearl, Odes of Solomon)
- Bardesanes (2nd-3rd cents.)
- Manicheism (3rd- cents.)
- Mandeans (modern Gnostic baptists).

Basic features:

- Use of elements from other religions.
- Myth of the origins that explains the nature of the current world and man's position in it.
- Gnosis, a revealed knowledge of the preceding as the prerequisite for redemption and salvation.

Myth of the origins:

- Explains how the world and man are the products of evil, but that man has in him a spark of goodness deriving from a world beyond (above) our material world.
- Having fallen into the material world, this essence of man is "unconscious" and must be awakened by an emissary from the other world. After this it will do whatever it takes to return to its original home. While so doing, man is a stranger, an alien, in the world.

Dualism:

- The universe consists of two parts: one good (light) and one evil (dark). The former is beyond human cognizance, situated beyond or above the latter, which contains the world in which we live.
- The origin of this dualism is explained differently in the various systems.

Origins of the idea of dualism:

- Iranian dualism: coexistence from eternity of goodness and evil \Rightarrow Manicheism.
- Platonic dualism: realm of spiritual, eternal, "ideas" ~ realm of transitory material counterparts.
- Indian dualism: Reality ~ deceptive appearances.

Gnostic (non-Manichean) dualism:

- Assigns the entire experienced world to the realm of evil, including the heavens, in which dwell the creator god and his assistants.
- The counterpart is represented by the Unknown God, the real lord of the universe, who dwells beyond experience, but still harbors concern for humans.

The realm of goodness and light:

- Inhabited by a supreme being, sometimes, because he can not be comprehended, referred to as the "Unknown God." He is also referred to as the "non-existent God," "alien God," (perfect) Aeon, the "root of all," Father

of All, etc.

The Unknown God is known only by revelation to prophets in the world.

The supreme being is surrounded by a plenitude (pleroma) of other beings, angels and other heavenly beings (living in or being the aeons).

The realm of evil and darkness:

Two principal explanations of its origin: 1. deteriorated from the realm of goodness; 2. without beginning, like the realm of goodness.

Described as matter (hyle, materies), body/corpse, stupidity, greed, etc.

Origin of the realm of evil in the first version:

The result of a “fall,” or downward movement from above, which eventually goes so far that the participants lose conscience—become ignorant, confused, darkened—of their origins and those above them and believe they are the supreme beings themselves and proceed to create their own world.

The material is a primary or secondary cosmic matter referred to as chaos.

The “fall” is governed by a cosmic principle of Destiny, which prevents God from preventing it.

The world of humans:

Created by a creator god (demiurge) belonging to the realm of evil. The creator god is unaware of the “Unknown God.”

Its purpose to retain the spark of light residing in each human and render impossible its salvation.

To obtain salvation humans must be “awakened” and follow strict rules of behavior.

Gnosis:

Knowledge about the real nature of the universe and, specifically, about the “other” world and the position of man.

Cf. the notion of “secrets of the divine” that a worshipper must know to enter into contact with the gods he worships.

Three-principle systems:

Sethian: light, spirit, and darkness.

Gnostic cosmogonies

based upon current geocentric world views, but drastically reinterpreted.

Outer sphere:

Realm of the Unknown God and his Pleroma.

Intermediate sphere:

Dwelling place of the inhabitants of the outer sphere who have had contact with the lower world.

Inner cosmos:

Earth at center above Tartaros/Hell, surrounded by air and eight spheres.

Eight spheres: seven planets (sun, moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn) and the fixed stars, ruled over by seven archonts.

The eighth sphere variously place of the zodiac and the paradise of the creator god, the head archont, or it belongs to the Intermediate sphere.

Gospel of Philip:

World comes into being through a transgression.
The creator failed; being corruptible himself, he created a corruptible world.

Gospel of Truth:

Ignorance about the Father caused terror and anguish.
The anguish became like an impenetrable mist.
Error (*plane*) gained strength.
She took matter (*hule*) and made a creature (*plasma*).
The Father contains Knowledge, which will eventually dissipate forgetfulness (about the origins).

The Anonymous Treatise:

Constitution of the upper realm:
The nature (*physis*) of the immortals is made from the “boundless one.”

The fall from the upper into lower realms:

Sophia (Pistis) caused a kind of veil or curtain that became the separation between the interior/upper realm of light and the exterior/lower realm of Shadow and chaos.
Envy is born in the Shadow and appears in all the aeons, but was thrown out into the chaos like an abortion and contained no divine spark (*pneuma*), becoming matter (*hule*).
Pistis Sophia shows herself to the Hyle, and contemplating the effect of her work, she is disturbed.
She wishes that something should come out of the spiritless substance and rule over Hyle, upon which a ruler (*archont*) appears out of the chaos in the form of a lion and bisexual. This is Jaldabaoth, the creator god, also called Ariel.
Once he begins to rule over the Hyle, Sophia withdraws back into the light.

Creation:

The Archont is impressed with his own greatness, sees no one else, and believes he is alone.
He separates water and dry land and makes a heaven for himself and the earth as his foot stool.
By his word he creates six sons, all bisexual. These archonts receive each his own heaven with inhabitants.
Having completed his work the creator god exalted himself and was praised by all the angels, etc.
In his hybris he says he is god and there is no one beside him.
Pistis Sophia is enraged and appears to Jaldabaoth, promising his final downfall.
She then reveals the image of her greatness in the water.
Jaldabaoth is confused and ashamed at the sight of something higher and other than himself. He prays that if there is indeed someone higher than him, he should reveal himself.
A light appears from above, piercing all the newly made heavens. A human figure appears in the light, called Light Adam.
From a relationship between him and the Providence (*pronoia*) of Jaldabaoth there arises Eros, which becomes the cause of the creation of paradise, plants, and animals.
Light Adam stays for two days then returns, leaving the darkness without reason (*nous*). He is now unable to go home, but must stay in an intermediate region.

Apocryphon of John:

First developments in the realm of light:

The Father of All recognizes his image reflected in the pure water surrounding him, and his thought (*ennoia*) is manifested: invisible spirit, Barbelo, the perfect aeon of glory, etc. She became the first “man,” the virgin spirit (*pneuma*).

Barbelo asks the Father to grant her a first knowledge, which then becomes manifest.

Same for various other manifestations, all in all they make up a bisexual “pentad of the aeons of the Father.”

After staring at the Father, Barbelo brings forth a “blessed spark of light,” “only-begotten, divine self-begotten, first-born son of the all,” the heavenly Christ.

The heavenly Christ and the invisible spirit continue the manifestations: mind (*nous*), will, the word (*logos*).

The heavenly Christ is set over all else, and the God of Truth causes four great lights as well as incorruptibility to emanate from him.

Further emanations: the heavenly Adam, “perfect true man.”

Christ sets him and his sons (Seth, etc.) over the four lights.

This completes the description of the aeons.

Next stage:

One of the aeons, their sister Sophia, wants to perform a mental emanation, but her partner, Barbelo, is uncooperative. Sophia performs it on her own, in ignorance, and the result is imperfect, hateful in appearance!

It looked like a serpent and a lion, its eyes shone with fire. She cast it away, out of the realm of light to hide it from the others. She hid it in a cloud of light, where only the holy spirit (*zoe*), the mother of all, could see it. She called it Jaldabaoth, the first archont.

Jaldabaoth leaves, makes for himself an aeon flaming with shining fire to dwell in.

Creation:

The demiurge (Jaldabaoth, Saklas) and his un-reason (*aponoia*) bring forth 12 angels, each with his own aeon patterned on the other 12 aeons. For each of them he made 7 angels with three powers each (altogether: 12 angels + 12 aeons(?) + $12 \cdot 7 = 84$ angels + $12 \cdot 7 \cdot 3 = 252$ powers = 360).

Anthropologies

Man created by the powers of evil after the image of the “proto-man”

The “proto-man” is an emanation from the realm of light: either the supreme being himself or a heavenly man made by the supreme being.

The “proto-man” either shows himself to the creators or he lets himself be captured by them and remains inside the earthly man created by the creators as an “inner man,” for example.

In either case, the creation of the earthly man backfires on the creators, since it will in the end destroy them and their work.

This is because either the supreme being himself or another from the realm of light inserts in the earthly man a spark of the original light or a divine spirit.

Man has a twice double nature:

MAN (total) = Spirit + worldly man

man (worldly) = body and “soul”

Hence classification of men:

spiritual/pneumatic

psychic

fleshly/sarkic, hylic

Salvation/redemption of man

Knowledge > salvation/redemption

Knowledge (gnosis) = about man’s true nature (know thyself = know thy Self [*nous*])

Who you are, how you were, and how you shall be (Book of Thomas)

Ignorance and (the powers of) darkness prevent knowledge and return to the origins

Must be removed like a garment, etc.

The Soul must ascend through the multiple heavens with their dangers up to the realm of light

Redeemers: messengers from the realm of light conveying the redeeming knowledge

The redeemer as a Call awakening the sleeping/sobering the drunken Soul.

The redeemer as the Word (*logos*)

The Soul that has been thus made knowledgeable propagates the knowledge further:

the redeeming redeemer > the Redeemed Redeemer (R. Reitzenstein)

Messengers:

Heavenly Adam, Eve, Abel, Seth, Enosh, etc. (NHC IX.1)

Hermes, shepherd of men

Christ

Simon Magus, Zostrianus

Christ

A member of the Pleroma bringing revelation

The living Jesus, proclaimer of knowledge

The phantom Jesus who died on the cross

Redemption = deliverance from the world and the body

Depends upon the will to be redeemed and corresponding action and behavior

The ascent of the Soul

The Soul goes back the way the Redeemer came, preparing the way for her.

The path is beset with dangers from the archonts in the various heavens > development of the use of magic.

At each station (watch house, etc.) the Soul must obtain the permission to proceed.

The same stages serve to effect a gradual divesting of the outer, material-psychic, garment.

Final purification through baptism.

The Soul enters paradise like a bride the bridal chamber.

End of the world: Apokatastasis “resettling back in its proper place”

Comes about when all the Souls have been saved, when all “the limbs have been assembled.”

Universe separated into two: upper and lower.

Destruction of the lower part: crumbling and burning (and drought and flooding).

If unsaved souls left, they will be forcefully purified. e.g., by fire.

If incapable of redemption, they will be forever lost.

If originally from inferior aeons they will return to these.

